ITALY: THE 'Z' SCRIPT NORMAN BIRNBAUM

THE NATION

DECEMBER 7, 1974 50 cents

What Did Happen on Nov. 5?

HARDLY A TWO-PARTY SYSTEM
James L. Sundquist

'PARTIES HAVE COME BACK BEFORE'
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HOW MAINE WENT
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Con Ed Cons the Press DAVID KUSNET

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LETTERS

improper per se

Chicago, Ill.

I disagree with your editorial of October 26 ["Conflicts and Motives"] that Rockefeller's $50,000 gift to Kissinger "was not improper per se." A person of character does not demean himself by accepting a gift of such magnitude that he cannot approximate it by way of reciprocation. Under these circumstances, the donee acknowledges his subservience and fealty to his magnanimous master and lord. Kissinger's acceptance of the gift supports the theme of your preceding editorial in the same issue ["Ideals and Interests"] which Kissinger himself has stressed, namely that "interests" generally must take precedence over "ideals". . . . It was improper per se for Rockefeller to give and for Kissinger to accept the gift.

Eli E. Fink

water & land

Brawley, Calif.

Mary Ellen Leary's article on Paul Taylor ["Paul Taylor: The Power of a Tenacious Man," *The Nation*, Oct. 12] was a well-deserved and long overdue acknowledgment of the significant role played by Taylor in recent decades in the West. He has been the inspiration for many of us who are attempting to enforce the 160-acre limitation and residency requirement of the Reclamation Act.

The 160-acre limitation and residency requirement may be the only feasible means now available to break up the huge concentration of power held by corporate agriculture in California. . . . That is why the landowners of the Imperial Valley have spent $600,000 in legal expenses to oppose the two Imperial Valley lawsuits.

We are in desperate need of money to help us carry our two cases seeking enforcement of the 160-acre limitation and residency requirement in the Imperial Valley. We won the residency case in the trial court and are appealing the 160-acre limitation case which was lost in the trial court by the government and thereafter not appealed by the Nixon administration. If we are successful on appeal, the implications will be felt throughout the seventeen Western reclamation states. We are about $20,000 short of the cost of proceeding with both cases through the Supreme Court. . . . Any reader who would like to help should send a donation to Society for the Alleviation of Rural Poverty, 1095 Market St., Room 418, San Francisco, Calif. 94103. Donations are deductible for federal income tax purposes.

Ben Yellen, M.D.

in defense of joy

Portland, Ore.

In George P. Elliott's "Waking from the American Dream" [*The Nation*, Nov. 16] I sense many of the neo-Calvinist assumptions that mar much of the "best" conservative thinking in America as well as (alas!) much of the "best" liberal thinking: "The more it hurts, the more true it is," and the converse, "If it involves pleasure or joy it must be shallow. . . ."

I was deeply offended by Elliott's casual dismissal of the difficult achievement of an increasing number of us in surmounting the obstacles of "Middle America" prudery. Perhaps Elliott has not experienced the social and intellectual climate of the Idaho steppes (where I spent twenty of my thirty years) or the Midwest. Whether or not, from his clever pan of Comfort's *Joy of Sex* I get the distinct impression he has never read the book, that he chose it because the title and subtitle lent themselves to a point he wished to make. For me at least *Joy of Sex* provided at age 30 what should have been available at age 13 but was not—thanks to the defenders of our "traditional values."

(Continued on page 596)

Cover Drawing: Interlandi, Los Angeles Times

EDITORIALS

Mondale Bows Out

Sen. Walter F. Mondale, after a year of barnstorming in thirty states and a visit to Moscow to acquire "visibility," has taken himself out of contention for the 1976 Democratic nomination. He does not have, he says, "the overwhelming desire to be President which is essential for the kind of campaign that is required." But even as Mondale bowed out, Rep. Morris Udall became the first Democrat to open his Presidential campaign officially. These twin events underscore the problem that confronts the liberal wing of the Democratic Party in the wake of sweeping Democratic victories in November.

There was a refreshing candor about Senator Mondale's statement and it can be accepted at face value—as far as it goes. But what is of particular interest about his withdrawal is the fact that as recently as November 17 he was described (by Joseph Kraft in *The New York Times Magazine*) as "the fastest moving of the candidates just now, and certainly the beneficiary of the Kennedy exit." Yet oddly enough the Kennedy exit seems to have capsized the Mondale candidacy. Why? For one thing it revealed the extent of the leadership vacuum and thereby stimulated pressures to fill it.

Robert Sherrill's by now famous article on Senator Kennedy and Chappaquiddick (*New York Times Magazine*, July 14) apparently came as a shock to the Senator and his aides. Not only was it widely reprinted and commented on but word spread that other papers were at work on similar investigations, including one by a team of reporters for the *Boston Globe*. Reaction to the piece combined with new family considerations, prompted Kennedy to take himself out of the race with a Sherman-like statement. The effect of the announcement, coming when it did (he was not expected to reach a decision until early 1975) flushed out the numerous contenders who had been waiting in the wings. By and large the initial reaction was one of relief all around, followed by a perceptible wave of sympathy for the Senator and a new respect. This sentiment seemed to expand after Kennedy subjected himself to a long and grueling interview with reporters for the *Globe* and answered their questions with a directness and responsiveness he had not shown in the past. Whatever the causes, the reaction was measurable: in New York, police had difficulty rescuing the Senator from audiences which he addressed on behalf of Hugh Carey; so great was the enthusiasm shown for him.

For the Democrats, Kennedy's withdrawal created a moment of truth. They had, it was said, eleven good candidates for the Vice Presidency but no widely popular or credible candidate for the Presidency. Joseph Kraft, in the article mentioned, listed eighteen names as constituting "the cast" of candidates and his list could have been easily doubled. But while the urgency to fill it increased the vacuum remained: a recital of the entire list would not result in any wild tossing of hats in the air. What did emerge was a sharp, swift, sobering realization that, in such a setting, "Scoop" Jackson, with loads of money and strong pressure-group backing, just might be selected by

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"brokered convention." Apart from Jackson's hawkish views, which have a long history—he was Nixon's favorite Democrat—there is the fact, sadly noted by one Democratic leader to Kraft, that "the day Jackson becomes President, Sominex goes out of business."

And a similar sobering realization came with the announcement that George Wallace plans to enter virtually every major Democratic primary in 1976. Jackson and Wallace, alone or in combination, spell trouble for the Democrats and neither "dark horses" nor "favorite sons" provide an answer. For Senator Mondale is right: to win the nomination today and to go on to win the Presidency, a politician must have enormous drive and determination and ample resources. In addition, of course, a candidate must demonstrate a capacity for *political* leadership. Charisma is not per se what is needed but rather the ability to rally people in support of a program that makes sense (assuming such a program exists). Jackson does not have this ability nor does Wallace or Bentsen or Udall; nor for that matter, does Mondale, or so it would seem from his announcement.

So, faced with a vacuum the extent of which has now been revealed, left-of-Center Democrats may yet turn to Kennedy to save the party from a takeover by forces which are not dismayed by Jackson and Wallace. Since there was nothing equivocal about Senator Kennedy's withdrawal statement, which was made well in advance of the election year, a genuine draft could now be initiated. Chappaquiddick would of course still be a factor, but it may well have been defused now that the media have investigated the tragedy with benefit of hindsight. The press is always reluctant to rev up on an old issue, if only because reruns and second treatments are seldom newsworthy. The edge is gone. In this sense Chappaquiddick is now an issue on which the press has had its say, and rival politicians who attempted to make something of it would probably face a backlash. Even if the Democrats do not turn to Kennedy as a candidate, his leadership will be indispensable if a Jackson-Wallace-Bentsen-Meany power grab is to be prevented. What the Democrats need is what the country craves: a demonstrated capacity for *political* leadership of the kind that President Ford in his first hundred days in office has shown he does not possess and will never acquire. But if a politician is to lead in any real sense, his capacity to do so must be harnessed to a relevant program.

The Suing of Ma Bell

The pattern is that of David against Goliath, but the outcome is likely to be different. Ma Bell has assets of $67 billion, by far the largest privately owned corporation in the world—if anything so big can be called "private." The antitrust division of the Department of Justice operates on an annual budget of $17 million.

Another difference is that antitrust suits are scarcely ever a fight to the death. Or a very slow death—witness the dissolution of Standard Oil. AT&T has been under government attack before. In 1956 the Justice Department, under Attorney General Brownell, accepted a consent decree offered by Bell's General Counsel T. Brooke Price. At the outset the government demanded separation

IN THIS ISSUE

December 7, 1974

EDITORIALS

578

ARTICLES

What *Did* Happen on Nov. 5?
582 Hardly a Two-Party System — *James L. Sundquist*
586 "Parties Have Come Back Before" — *Howard L. Reiter*
588 How Maine Went — *Evelyn Scribner*
589 The "Z" Script: Italy Fears a Coup — *Norman Birnbaum*
592 Race, Homicide & the News — *Phil Blake*
593 Con Ed Cons the Press — *David Kusnet*

BOOKS & THE ARTS

597 Joyce Carol Oates's Women — *Constance Ayers Denne*
598 In a Fog (poem) — *Michael Niflis*
599 Brandon: The Last Americans — *D'Arcy McNickle*
601 Friedman: Museum
Baumbach: Reruns
Spielberg: Twiddledum Twaddledum — *Beverly Gross*
602 Postcard from Poison Spider Creek, Wyoming (poem) — *Jim Barnes*
603 Archer: The Plot to Seize the White House — *Richard J. Walton*
604 Dance — *Nancy Goldner*
605 Music — *David Hamilton*
606 Films — *Robert Hatch*

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of the cozy arrangement between AT&T and its manufacturing subsidiary, Western Electric. The two remained tightly embraced. Now the government again wants them parted and it has a better chance—but don't lay odds on it.

That $67 billion in assets is only one index of how well Ma Bell is nourished. She has more than a million employees, 2.9 million shareholders, revenues of $23.5 billion annually. She holds a capacious umbrella over twenty-three regional operating companies, which with few exceptions are big in themselves. There are 300 million telephone instruments in the world and AT&T *owns* (they are only leased to the subscribers) a third of them. In the United States alone there are 112 million telephone users.

Western Electric is no pigmy; its 1973 revenues were $7 billion. It is, however, possibly the most vulnerable part of the empire. Other interests know how to manufacture telephone instruments, switchboards, radio microwave equipment (which carries most television pictures and sound), cable, etc. As matters stand, Western Electric earnings are promptly siphoned off by the parent company. The regional affiliates are regulated, more or less, by public service commissions, but Western Electric is free of such surveillance. If we were betting on what is going to happen, we would confess the most ignorance regarding the disposition of Bell Telephone Laboratories; but we might gamble a quarter at even money on Western Electric being torn from the arms of Ma Bell. As Prof. Jesse Markham puts it: "Should a public utility with regulated rates be its own supplier . . . of equipment when the supplier is unregulated?"

AT&T is resolved to fight and it not only has the resources but its millions of customers are going to pay the lawyers. The defense of the Bell empire is part of the cost of doing business.

Nothing much will happen immediately. The wheels of antitrust grind slowly, though not exceedingly small, as the 1956 settlement shows. The present action has been taken after fourteen months of investigation; a decade would be a prudent estimate of the duration of the case. It will, therefore, probably extend over two administrations and perhaps several Attorneys General and Presidents, with corresponding opportunities for compromise.

In this latest round, antitrust will have the support of a large and growing group of corporations that, taking advantage of electronic advances and an FCC ruling creating a class of specialized common carriers, are eager to acquire a foothold in the private-line business from which Ma Bell currently derives $1 billion in annual revenue. These companies are, in effect, allies of antitrust in the present action—a factor of considerable political importance.

Even so, much depends on the press. It is easy to write stories about a malefactor President and his aides, but investigating AT&T and its operations poses a problem of a different order. In the past the press has failed miserably to cover this beat—one of the most important in the whole field of corporate power—and experience suggests that it will not keep a spotlight on the litigation which antitrust has now initiated. Extraordinary behind-the-scenes pressures will be brought to quash this action or to arrange another "consent" decree. Not only should the litigation be carefully watched but the press should investigate the suicide of T. G. Gravitt, a high-level Texas Bell official, who declared that "Watergate is a gnat compared to the Bell System" and made references to a political "slush fund." (See "Skeletons in the Bell System" by Stephen M. Aug, *The Nation*, July 6.)

The issue which antitrust seeks to test in the courts is of paramount importance: can power of the kind that Ma Bell typifies be held accountable at any level of government authority? Or is the corporation so big, and so powerful, that even the federal government cannot force it to give an accounting of its performance to the public? For AT&T has never been regulated—not by the supine state regulatory agencies (although some have tried harder than others), or by the FCC, or by any other agency of government. If this issue is finally to be tested, the press must keep the litigation under constant surveillance, otherwise it may be settled not in the courts but in the corridors of power.

A Heavy Gavel

On the eve of the disastrous final meeting of the Democratic Charter Commission in Kansas City last August [see editorial, "Barkan's Bulldozer," *The Nation*; September 7] national committeewoman Anne Wexler warned the liberal caucus: "If you think that [National Chairman Robert] Strauss has stacked *this* meeting, wait until you see what he does when we come back in December, when he'll control the whole machinery."

Wexler was right, as she often is, and although most disputes over the draft charter are likely to be resolved before the Midterm Conference begins in Kansas City on December 6, Chairman Strauss is taking no chances. "The Final Call for the 1974 Conference on Democratic Party Organization and Policy," the little blue rule book which will govern the proceedings, outlines a national Democratic gathering unlike any in recent history—especially the Miami convention of 1972. To wit:

No Credentials Committee. A "Compliance Committee," meeting in Washington, D.C., has already heard and ruled on all state challenges. No appeals will be in order at Kansas City.

No surprises from the floor. All substitutes for and/or amendments to the draft charter must have been approved by at least 40 per cent of a special "Screening Committee" or have amassed a petition containing signatures of 10 per cent of the delegates (200 names)—evenly distributed among five state delegations—*before* Friday night, December 6. No new motions can come from the floor during the debate on the charter Saturday.

No ideological battles over a platform. There will be eight "issue panels" during the conference, with each delegate attending his or her choice of two. The chairpersons will present eight "reports" on the discussions, but no vote will be taken on the reports.

No extended debates. During the debate on the charter Saturday, motions for meal breaks or adjournment are out of order until consideration of the charter is completed. Recesses are limited to fifteen minutes. Debate on approved amendments is limited to twenty minutes, but

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may be extended by majority vote to a maximum of one hour.

No more "Ohio passes." Votes are to be voice votes, standing votes and, only as a last resort, roll call. But the "roll call" will consist in the state delegation chairperson polling his or her delegation and then *telephoning* the results to the podium. The conference secretary will read a final list of the votes.

No more waving to John Chancellor. A virtual media brownout. Total floor passes for reporters are limited to 100, but during the debate on the charter, *no one from the press will be permitted on the floor.* Network cameras and broadcast booths will be forbidden to hang their banners in the conference hall.

Charter Commission Chairman Terry Sanford, who will preside over the debate Saturday, continues the guerrilla war with Strauss that has been going on for two years. The liberal former North Carolina Governor has insisted that one of his long-time political backers, Hugh Cannon, be appointed conference parliamentarian. In addition, he has mobilized almost the entire forty-five-member North Carolina delegation as a "liaison committee" for the Charter Commission in Kansas City, hoping to have at least one observer present at (and reporting on) every state delegation meeting.

MARK PINSKY

'Abuse of Power'

Chief Judge David L. Bazelon of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia is a distinguished jurist in a court that ranks just below the Supreme Court in juridical and social importance. On November 15, when Judge Bazelon took the television industry to task, his concern was with the social effects of electronic communications, a matter which ranks in long-term importance above most headline-making events.

Judge Bazelon did not mince words. Speaking at a dinner of the Federal Communications Bar Association in Washington, he called on television industry leaders to admit "their abuse of the immense power of television for the private profit of a few." With an occasional inclusion of an informative documentary or a drama that mirrors life, television dishes out an endless diet of what Judge Bazelon called "mass appeal pablum, designed to titillate a sufficiently large majority to enable the broadcasters to sell the most advertising." Programs are rated by the number of viewers, figured in thousands or millions, who can be induced to listen to the commercials, and immense sums are collected for each minute, or fraction thereof, which in the prime-time hours are often devoted to proprietary remedies—including outright nostrums—to alleviate the discomfort of colds, hemorrhoids and other common ills. In the recent broadcasts of *The Godfather* the reported rate for sixty seconds of air time was $250,000.

But the predominance of material warranted to bore any civilized person is the least of the evils that commercial television perpetrates, year in, year out. The worst aspect of today's programming is the emphasis on violence and the aseptic form in which murder, rape and cruelty are invariably presented. The Television Code, to which most stations subscribe, proscribes "detailed presentation of brutality or physical agony by sight or by sound." The physical and psychological horrors of murder, torture and other forms of violence are thus concealed, leaving the way open for conversion of violence into pure entertainment. The effect on children and susceptible adults is hardly edifying. Today, in quite respectable neighborhoods, elderly people are attacked by groups of children, beaten and robbed and sometimes senselessly killed—murder having become a form of sport. In view of the amount of time that children, especially slum children, spend in front of the tube, common sense would seem to point to a connection between TV and real-life violence, but the industry's bosses have always denied that possibility.

It is an old problem, raised by Senator Kefauver in 1954, by Sen. Thomas Dodd in 1961, but nothing came of either survey. In 1969 Sen. John Pastore, chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Communications, made another attempt. President Nixon approved the idea of a study to be headed by a commission which became the Surgeon General's Scientific Committee on Television and Social Behavior. The result might have been the same as before; the industry tried to see to that. The networks had veto power over the committee members, and reserved five of the twelve memberships for network bosses. They failed to get an innocuous report only because the research staff was not overawed and reached conclusions which conformed with their findings. One of those involved, Dr. George Gerbner, dean of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications, sums up the result: "Now, a government-appointed commission with heavy industry representation has found that there is some probability of a causal relationship between television violence and real-life violence." Even this qualified conclusion was the result of much conflict between the research staff and the commission members.

Judge Bazelon pinned down the basic faults of the present system in his address: "The programming executives and their advertiser clients," he said, "must stop their single-minded purpose to achieve higher ratings, more advertising and greater profits and stop to consider what greater purposes television should serve. And they must do this soon if we are to preserve our First Amendment values for telecommunications."

This last observation is the crux of the matter. But the Federal Communications Commission must on no account be bamboozled into taking responsibility for any part of program content. What is needed is a decent sense of what the networks owe to the public which grants them the use of the frequencies on which they operate. They are at present abusing that custodianship, and it is to be hoped that they will take Judge Bazelon's warning seriously. There will always be those who will find the answer in censorship, but the law does not give the FCC any jurisdiction over program content, nor should it. The networks and unaffiliated stations must take that responsibility on themselves, and be quick about it. The prevalence of violence on the air would be a good starting point. It has not changed since 1967: the present average is said to be five violent episodes per program, eight per hour and—still worse—seventeen per cartoon hour. On that basis, the networks are leaders in child abuse, and the fact that it is insidious and ostensibly playful will not save the networks from the consequences.

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The Hole

The American prison system as a whole is unworthy of a civilized country. Consider, for example, the California prison system—by no means the worst. The state has a growing prison population—up from 17,000 male felons in 1971 to more than 21,000 this year, with raging epidemics of violence, drug addiction, homosexual battling and gang warfare. The prison administration has tried to cope with its problems by segregating troublesome prisoners in rows of 9-by-5-foot cells. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, solitary confinement prisoners at San Quentin, Folsom, Soledad and the Deuel Vocational Institute now number 1,500. While this form of punishment is undeniably cruel, in California it cannot be termed unusual.

There seems to be no meeting of minds between critics of the system and prison administrators. A recent study by an Assembly Select Committee on Prison Reform and Rehabilitation offers, in the *Times*'s words, "a damning indictment of the use of administrative segregation in prisons." A group of California attorneys has formed a law firm under the name of Public Advocates, headed by J. Anthony Kline, to fight the concept of punishment by confinement in "the Hole." This group is suing Raymond K. Procunier, California's Director of Corrections, and the superintendents or wardens of the four main prisons, seeking an injunction and declaratory judgment against the practice. The suit, filed in U.S. District Court, follows several earlier restraining decisions, both in District Court and the California Supreme Court, which have been ignored by the prison authorities, presumably with the sanction of Governor Reagan. Procunier maintains that without authority to impose solitary confinement it would be impossible to operate the maximum security prisons. Kline contends that while some prisoners must be isolated, only 5 per cent of the men who go into the Hole for the first time have any previous history of violence or assault. "However," he adds, "if you put a man in the Hole for any length of time he becomes violent. He becomes an animal."

Solitary confinement was originally conceived as part of an adjustment center where prisoners with peculiar problems could receive specialized treatment. But increasing violence in prison, according to Procunier, "has forced a major emphasis to be shifted to security." Dr. Rundle, formerly chief psychiatrist at Soledad, has classified types of prisoners confined to "adjustment centers" as flamboyant homosexuals, protective custody cases (i.e., prisoners who have testified against other prisoners), "racial agitators"—even though they may not have advocated violence—defiant prisoners who cannot or will not adapt to the system, et al. Some of these so segregated—few but still some—are actual or potential murderers against whom other prisoners and the guards are entitled to protection.

In every sense of the word, this is a vicious circle. Violence in prison, including killings, is demonstrably increasing year by year. Prison officials are understandably alarmed—even frightened—and men who fear other men whom they have been set to guard can be expected to take ruthless advantage of their superior power. Thus violence begets suppression begets violence—it can be shown that solitary confinement, if sufficiently prolonged, will induce paranoia in the most stable of victims.

It is like violence in the streets, where the police, knowing themselves at hazard, increasingly shoot at moving objects. Such problems cannot be cured directly; they must be attacked systematically in all their implications. That takes time, but meanwhile, the worst symptoms of the disease can be allayed by citizen vigilance, such as that represented by Public Advocates. A judge has granted the group the right to inspect the files of every prisoner subjected to isolation, to discover whether there are valid reasons for the action. The Department of Corrections has filed an appeal, alleging that such oversight of prison administration would be disruptive. They might well find it so, but the only way to control the severity of their administration is to keep it constantly before the public eye.

WHAT DID HAPPEN ON NOV. 5?

Hardly a Two-Party System

JAMES L. SUNDQUIST

It begins to look as though all those obituaries for the American party system may have been a trifle premature. The new American voter was supposed to be the one who no longer paid attention to party labels. "I vote for the man, not the party," was the typical citizen's response to questions about his or her voting habits. David Broder and Haynes Johnson of *The Washington Post*, after a month of cross-country interviewing during the campaign of 1970, reported that they "found it rare to encounter a voter—anywhere—who thinks of politics in terms of political parties."

This stereotype of the new independent voter is so firmly fixed that even *after* last month's election so careful a political observer as Tom Wicker could write in *The New York Times* that the "public seems little swayed by party labels and 'votes for the man'—or the woman—it likes best."

Yet that is precisely what did *not* happen on November 5. What occurred that day was a great *party* landslide. It will probably turn out, when all the analyses have been

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made, to have been the greatest shift from one party to another—measured in the vote for all offices from the top to the bottom of the ticket—since the New Deal triumphs of the 1930s.

The voters were not sitting back in judicial impartiality, observing the demeanor and appraising the sincerity of the candidates as they took their turns before the television cameras, trying to decide which personality they "liked best." Quite the contrary. What they wanted to know, this time, was what party label the man or woman was wearing. If the label was Republican, they intended to penalize the candidate, whether they liked the face and the personality or not. And it did not matter whether he or she was an incumbent in the Congress who could be linked by party association to Watergate, or an obscure aspirant for the state legislature somewhere far from Washington. Everybody wearing the Republican label suffered, more or less.

It is true that voters did some picking and choosing among Republicans, particularly among those running for the higher offices, where personal identification is most readily established. But even here the swing was away from the GOP, since the basic test was how squarely Republican a particular candidate had shown himself. Those who suffered least, logically enough, had dissociated themselves early from Richard Nixon and the dominant wing of the Republican Party. If they were seen by the voters as independents, as only semi-Republican in their inclinations, then they might be saved. In this category were Senators Javits of New York, Schweiker of Pennsylvania, Mathias of Maryland and Packwood of Oregon, all of whom bucked the tide to retain their seats by comfortable margins, while most of the stalwarts were either losing (Dominick of Colorado), winning by a hair (Dole of Kansas), or being locked in such a photo finish that the outcome of the election was in doubt for some time (Bellmon of Oklahoma and Young of North Dakota). The only conservative Republican Senator who had an easy time of it was Goldwater, who in Arizona is not just a Senator but an institution.

And the same was true in races for the House of Representatives. The orthodox conservative wing, the down-the-line supporters of Republicanism as embodied in Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, was shattered. One can point to the four last-ditch Nixon defenders on the House Judiciary Committee—Sandman and Maraziti of New Jersey, Dennis of Indiana and Mayne of Iowa—who were defeated while their GOP colleagues who voted in favor of impeachment (except Froehlich of Wisconsin), were winning handily. But beyond that were such leading Republican conservatives as Widnall of New Jersey, Bray of Indiana and Broyhill of Virginia. Indeed, of the thirty-six incumbent House Republicans defeated in their campaigns for re-election, hardly a one was numbered among the party's liberal-moderate minority.

The question is: How much of this massive shift in voter preference toward the Democratic Party is a one-time thing, and how much reflects a lasting shift in party preference that will have a bearing upon future election results? In other words, will the party balance return to "normal" once the Republican Party purges itself of the taint of Watergate and the economy is restored to reasonable stability? Or has there been a significant change in what can be considered normal?

One must pause here and consider how such things are measured. A party's "normal" strength is the vote it would get, in any given election, if all the abnormal influences present in that election could be removed. If the distribution of strength is lopsided, what is normal may be clear enough. It is obvious that, until recently, Vermont was normally Republican; Patrick Leahy, when he is sworn in in January, will be its first Democratic Senator since the Republican Party was formed. It is equally obvious that Georgia and Arkansas are normally Democratic. So too, the nation as a whole had a normal Republican majority in the decades before the Great Depression and the New Deal, and it has had a normal Democratic majority ever since. This can be seen from the make-up of the successive Congresses in those two periods.

But these judgments can be made only in retrospect, on the basis of a series of elections. If a shift in the normal party balance is taking place, that cannot be learned at the time from analyzing the results of a single election. For every election is full of one-time, special influences, and how the electorate would have behaved in the absence of those influences can only be guessed at.

However, two other kinds of data tell us something of the normal strength of parties. One is voter registration data, in states where the voters are required, in order to vote in primary elections, to declare which party they belong to. The other is public opinion data, when voters are asked by poll takers to state their party preference. Data from both these sources suggest that the swing to the Democratic Party in the 1974 election is in some considerable degree a gain not just in this November's vote but also in the number of voters who feel a basic allegiance to the party. If so, those added voters will have a predisposition in every election to vote Democratic—all other things being equal—and that could be a fact of some historic significance.

Prior to the 1974 election, two trends stood out in the structure of the party system. One of these is called *convergence*. The former one-party states of both the South and the North had been breaking down. The pattern of party competition that had been established nationally in the 1930s—conservatives concentrated in the Republican Party and liberals in the Democratic—was steadily taking effect in state after state that had originally been resistant to the New Deal realignment. So the solid South became receptive to Republicanism, and its cities, in particular, became two-party battlegrounds. Meanwhile, Northern states that had been traditionally Republican grew in Democratic strength until some of them, like Minnesota, can by this time probably be considered normally Democratic.

This trend clearly continued in the 1974 election. Senator-elect Leahy of Vermont is this year's symbol in

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the North. The most rock-ribbed Republican state of all—one of the two that stuck with Alfred Landon in 1936—finally sends a Democrat to the Senate. And to dramatize that this was not a fluke, it also re-elected its Democratic Governor, Thomas Salmon.

In the South, the convergence trend was interrupted by the Democratic landslide. But even so, South Carolina chose its first Republican Governor in history, James Edwards. And the Baton Rouge, La. Congressional district joined the scores of those in the South that no longer find the election of a Republican Congressman unthinkable. At this writing, the outcome of that election is uncertain, but whether the Republican candidate turns out to have won or lost, approximately half the voters in that formerly one-party district showed that they would rather abandon the Democracy of their fathers than vote contrary to their conservative convictions. The realignment of the 1930s, then, has now reached Baton Rouge.

The other striking trend of the past decade has been the rise in independent political attitudes, reflected in the phenomenal increases in ticket splitting. Between the end of the 1950s and 1972, the number of independent voters in the electorate (as self-identified in the public opinion polls) had risen from more than 20 per cent to somewhere between 30 and 34 per cent. That is a gain, speaking roughly—which is all one can do, given the margin of error in any individual poll—of 10 million to 12 million voters.

The independent voters came, again speaking roughly, about equally from the two major parties. In other words, each party lost the allegiance of 5 million or so—as party members were alienated, or as party members died and their places were taken by young people who refused to identify with either party.

It is this trend that in the 1974 election may have been reversed—that is, insofar as the Democratic Party is concerned. What evidently happened this year is that most if not all of its 5 million lost voters returned to the fold. Not only did the Democratic Party get their votes but—what is of great importance, looking to the future—their emotional allegiance too.

A Harris poll taken just before the election found the voters identifying themselves as 47 per cent Democratic, 21 per cent Republican, and 32 per cent independent. That puts the Democrats back to just about where they were in the 1950s, before the slight rise in the Kennedy and early Johnson periods and the subsequent long decline that began with the party's entanglement in Vietnam and continued through the nomination and campaign of George McGovern.

Whether the Democrats have indeed regained their lost strength will not be known, for sure, until the Harris findings are confirmed by other polls. But the theory of party alignment suggests also that this should be the case. The basis of our party system is the cleavage between the parties established in the 1930s. This had two aspects. One was the ideological distinction between a conservative Republican Party and an activist Democratic Party. The other was a class distinction between a GOP made up disproportionately of upper-income groups and drawing support from big business, and a Democratic Party centered below the median income level and strongly backed by organized labor. The two aspects were consistent because the poor had more to gain from governmental activism and the rich had more to lose.

As the passions of the New Deal period cooled, both parties tended to move somewhat toward the Center. Herbert Hoover was succeeded in Republican Party leadership by men like Willkie and Dewey, who accepted most of the New Deal innovations, and once Harry Truman left the political scene the Democratic leaders spoke usually in more tempered terms as well. So the distance between the parties narrowed. Nevertheless, when issues arose that revived the New Deal cleavage—along class lines, like the Taft-Hartley Act or tax reform, or along activist-conservative lines, like Medicare or federal aid to education—the difference between the parties became sharp again, and the votes in Congress split closer to the party line. As long as issues of this type were dominant, the party system remained meaningful—even to young voters who had not lived through the original realignment period when the whole political system was starkly polarized—and the number of independent voters showed no significant increase.

In the 1960s, however, the party structure was thrown into turmoil by a series of issues that cut across the electorate in a different direction, dividing people along different lines. Vietnam did not separate people along the ideology and class lines of the established party system. Neither did the civil rights struggle of the 1960s, nor did the various components of the "social issue" that reached its climax in Spiro Agnew's 1970 campaigning—law and order, riots, drugs, pornography, the youth rebellion, and so on. Neither did the later race issues, centered on open housing and on bussing. These divided people by race, by age, by social outlook.

And that was what brought the great surge in independent voting. Analysis of the increase in those who identified themselves in the polls as independents shows that it was made up largely of the groups who influenced most powerfully the new cross-cutting issues. One large group of new independents was the young, those most alienated by Vietnam. Another consisted of Southern segregationists, those most stirred by the integration question. A third was made up of Catholics, those (along with Southerners) most aroused by the social issue. All these represented primarily Democratic defections. A fourth group of the new independents was composed of well-educated Northern suburbanites, normal Republican voters who cut loose from their party attachment when the GOP took its right turn under Barry Goldwater. All these voters found that neither party reflected their views on what they felt to be the overriding issues of the day.

What the 1974 election appears to confirm is that if cross-cutting issues can disrupt party ties, issues that run coincident with the existing line of party cleavage can reinforce those ties. In other words, as soon as Vietnam, race questions, and the social issue gave way to class questions and issues of governmental intervention in the economy, the existing party system took on meaning once again. In 1974, the questions were whether people were going to have jobs, whether their wages would keep pace with the prices in the grocery store, whether oil company

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profits were too high, who was going to bear the brunt of inflation and of taxes. These aroused class feelings, and feelings about the role of government in protecting the economic security of wage earners and their families. Sensing that they were threatened, people of traditional Democratic leanings turned again instinctively to *their* party—to the party formed in a deeper economic crisis forty years ago for just that purpose, to protect their interests and represent their views. Straying Democrats came home and new Democrats were made. Apparently 5 million or so of them.

Theoretically, at a time when coincident issues are dominant, party attachments should be strengthened on both sides of the line of cleavage, but in 1974 there is no sign that the Republicans gained back any of their lost adherents. To the contrary, they continued to decline. Here Watergate appears surely to be the explanation. That scandal made the GOP virtually untouchable for new voters. The fragmentary reports that have appeared in the press on registration of new voters by parties show an advantage in favor of the Democrats so lopsided—five to one, six to one, eight to one—that it can be explained in no other way. And what movement of independents toward the Republicans might have developed as the result of a quarrel centered only on inflation and recession and price and wage controls and energy policy was checked or offset by a revulsion against the party identified with Richard Nixon.

This, of course, will pass. In the meantime, however, the country scarcely has a two-party system. With the Democrats enjoying a 47-to-21 advantage over the Republicans, a one-and-one-half-party system would be a more accurate description. Unless and until the Republican Party can claim more than one-fifth of the electorate—surely the lowest base any major party has ever had in the history of the nation—it can expect to win only occasionally. Victories will come only when the GOP can offer candidates of such superior personal appeal that they can cut into the normal Democratic vote and win to their side the preponderance of independents, or when the Democratic Party is badly split or tarred with scandal, or when it has had power and made a mess of things.

Since neither party has any inherent advantage in recruitment of candidates, or in the ability to keep itself clean, or in administrative effectiveness, the great Democratic superiority should find expression in control of the White House most of the time, most governorships at all times, and Congress probably all the time. Indeed, the last of these is taken for granted already; the Republicans have controlled Congress after only two elections of the last twenty-two—and those took place before the current decline of the GOP. In fact, if one looks ahead the Republican prospect only gets worse, for the party is disproportionately strong in the higher age groups, weakest among the young.

Nevertheless, the present one-sided division of party strength only suggests what will "normally" happen, not what will happen in any given election. The normal vote is most likely to be expressed at the bottom of the ballot—in the least visible races, where the voters do not receive a clear impression of the candidate as an individual and hence vote the party label as a proxy. That is why the swing to the Democrats was more pronounced this year in races for the House of Representatives than in contests for Senator and governor. Where they know the individual, they may single him out for punishment, even when they support his party for every other office, as in the case of Governor Gilligan of Ohio. Or they may single him out for preservation, as the voters of New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Oregon supported their incumbent moderate GOP Senators at the same time they chose Democrats as governors.

The Presidency is by far the most visible office of them

– The Denver Post

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all. At that level the highest proportion of votes are cast for "the man, not the party." So the 1974 election returns tell us very little about the prospects of President Ford in 1976, if he runs for a full term. The Democratic preponderance of normal party strength will count for something—if the Democrats avoid a party split—but the Democratic advantage has been overcome four times in recent years, twice by Eisenhower and twice by Nixon (although it was a smaller advantage on those occasions). Offsetting the Democrats' stronger base is the Republican advantage of a Ford incumbency, if he is the candidate. Only twice in this century has a sitting President who sought election been denied it—in the cases of Taft and Hoover, and both were defeated under the most extraordinary of circumstances.

Democrats can take comfort from the knowledge that it is far better to enter a Presidential campaign with 47 per cent of the voters professing some kind of emotional attachment to the party and a predisposition to vote for its candidate than it is to begin the race with 21 per cent. It will be harder for the Democratic Party to lose than it would have been before the recent accretion of new strength, but the party has in the past shown great ingenuity in beating a path to defeat. And while the Republican Party must accomplish the greatest uphill climb ever faced by any party—in terms of the base of strength from which it starts—it has a record of overcoming disadvantages. So the outcome will still turn on the personalities of candidates not yet selected and events not yet occurred. □

'Parties Have Come Back Before'

HOWARD L. REITER

"Parties have come back before," said Gerald Ford in the wake of the 1974 elections, "and we will, too." As partisan knives are being sharpened in anticipation of the 94th Congress and the 1976 Presidential contest, it would be well to keep that remark in mind. Apart from the obvious loss in strength, how has the present agony of the GOP changed it for the long run?

In the three national elections since the Republicans returned to the White House in 1969, a strange anomaly has occurred: while moderates have done better than conservatives at the polls, the balance of power within the party has shifted more and more to the right. That is largely because the victorious moderates have primarily been incumbents—veterans like Javits, Percy, Hatfield and Rockefeller, whose victories in 1970, 1972 and 1974, however impressive, brought no new faces into positions of leadership. On the other hand, the newer Governors and Senators have been, like Sen. Bill Brock of Tennessee and Gov. Meldrim Thomson of New Hampshire, right wingers to warm the heart of any Goldwater conservative.

In 1972 the GOP Senators who ran ahead of Nixon were, aside from Clifford Hansen and Ted Stevens, nearly all moderates—Edward Brooke, Clifford Case, Mark Hatfield, James Pearson and Charles Percy. The ten who ran behind Nixon were all conservatives like Strom Thurmond, Howard Baker and James McClure. But the only new faces were in the latter group—McClure, Peter Domenici, Jesse Helms, Dewey Bartlett and William Scott. So, despite the moderates' superior electoral strength, they lost ground.

The November election produced the same effect in the Senate. Retirees, intentional or otherwise, were a mixed group of moderate conservatives (George Aiken and Marlow Cook) and extreme conservatives (Wallace Bennett, Peter Dominick, Edward Gurney). But the new men can be expected to provide nothing but hard-line conservatism—Jake Garn, the Mayor of Salt Lake City and the choice of the right-wing tabloid *Human Events*; Paul Laxalt, Nevada's former Governor and a veteran of the Draft Goldwater movement, and possibly New Hampshire's Louis Wyman, who as state Attorney General crusaded against Communists in New Hampshire's colleges, and as Congressman compiled a lifetime rating of 81 per cent from Americans for Constitutional Action.

Among Governors the change has been less pronounced. Retirees include moderates—Dunn (Tenn.), McCall (Ore.), Sargent (Mass.) and Vanderhoof (Colo.)—and conservatives—Hathaway (Wyo.), Meskill (Conn.), Reagan (Calif.), Williams (Ariz.) and Wilson (N.Y.). The new Governors are equally diverse, from Goldwaterite James Edwards in South Carolina to James Rhodes of Ohio, whose Presidential candidacy in 1968 kept the Buckeye delegation from Nixon. More important may be a qualitative change. McCall and Sargent, as well as Nelson Rockefeller in his prime, were eloquent spokesmen for the progressive path. Now McCall has retired, Sargent has been ousted and Rockefeller has deserted the cause.

The sixty or so GOP members of the House of Representatives who will not be returning in January are, on the average, slightly more conservative than their colleagues. Last year, Americans for Democratic Action awarded them an average rating of 13 per cent, compared with 18 per cent for all House Republicans. But the twenty or so new Republicans in the 94th Congress represent districts that are far more rural than the national average. So we can expect at most a slight liberalization of the party in the House.

The extent to which Congressional Republicans as a group seek to change their ideological coloration should become clearer when a number of key leadership positions are filled. In particular, New Hampshire's Norris Cotton, the chairman of the Senate GOP Conference, and Leslie Arends of Illinois, who has been the House GOP Whip for thirty-two years, are both retiring, and fights could ensue between moderates and conservatives to fill their shoes. Moreover, there will be six vacancies on the fifteen-member Policy Committee in the Senate and a similar

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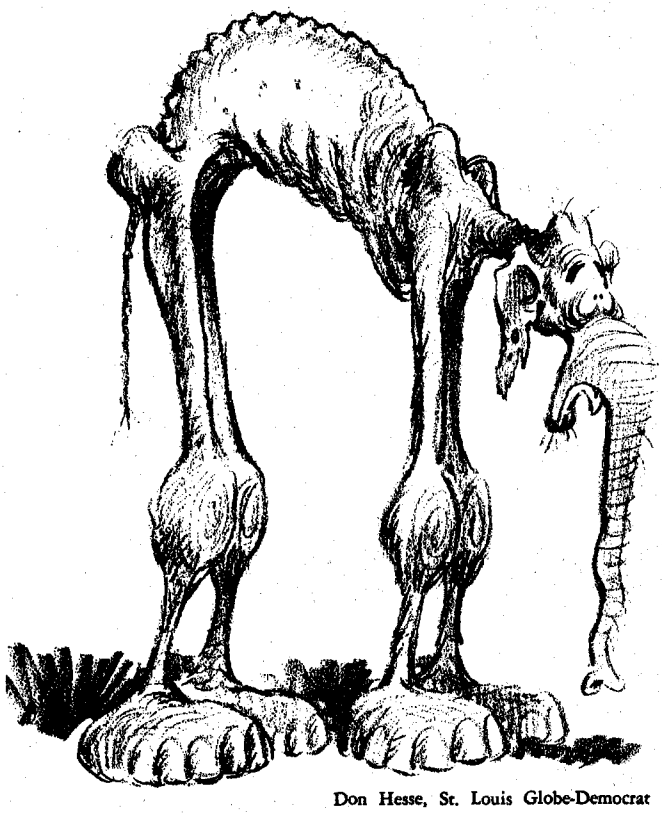

Don Hesse, St. Louis Globe-Democrat

turnover on the House committees that make Republican committee assignments and aid members in their bids for re-election. It will be interesting to see how those vacancies are filled, for the party traditionally has chosen to purge itself after major electoral disasters. In 1958 the team of Dirksen and Halleck acceded to the leadership, and in 1964 Gerald Ford replaced old fogy Halleck with Ford's team of young fogies. (Only in the House of Representatives could the then 51-year-old Ford be termed a "Young Turk" by the media.) While Hugh Scott and John Rhodes may not be in trouble, fierce battles may develop over lesser posts, and right wingers in the House may once again seek to depose their party's third-ranking leader, Conference Chairman Anderson of Illinois.

The continuing conservative drift has been abetted by the abject surrender of party moderates to political expediency in 1972. During the first four years of Nixon's Presidency, party progressives cast strategic votes and voiced eloquent protest against the worst excesses of the administration's war policies, its failure to fight for domestic reform, and its campaign against civil rights and civil liberties. By their dissent, GOP moderates maintained credibility with many Americans who otherwise would long since have written off the party as hopeless.

Then in 1972, Republicans were called upon to support the national ticket in what all members of the party knew would be a massive Presidential victory. Nixon did little to make it easy for them: he had chosen Agnew for a second term, promised more Rehnquists on the Supreme Court during his acceptance speech in Miami Beach, and made ostentatious plays for the most reactionary elements of the Democratic Party. Yet amazingly, the moderates knuckled under. From Margaret Chase Smith and Walter Hickel, who acted according to the convention script, to the youthful members of the Ripon Society, the entire moderate wing of the party marched in lock step toward electoral nirvana. Not one voice was raised in opposition, no responsible Republican who, while not endorsing McGovern, made it clear that Nixon and Agnew had fallen far short of the standards that genuine progressives maintain.

In a few weeks of mechanical partisanship, moderate Republicans sacrificed much of the credibility they had nurtured during the previous four years. Moreover, when the Watergate dam burst, and the righteous tones of the Charles Percys, the Lowell Weickers, the William Cohens and the Tom Railsbacks filled the airwaves, one could legitimately ask: where were you in 1972? We did not know then, comes the refrain—but in fact they did know much of the roots of Watergate: the vicious attacks on political dissent, the eagerness to bug and wiretap, the inordinate influence of corporate power in policy making, the excessive secrecy, and Nixon's own history of shady campaign techniques. Where was Percy when protest would have been most effective? Where was Cohen?

The failure of the moderates was a failure of nerve and of principle, and it had concrete results. Having failed to blow the whistle in 1972, they had no alibi in 1974; many chose not to run for higher office, some were defeated for re-election. The chief organizational entity of the party's left wing, the Ripon Society (in which I was once active), has suffered gravely from having joined the rest of the party in singing Nixon's praises in 1972. Ready to solidify what it hoped would be improved relations with party regulars, the organization then moved from Cambridge to Washington, and abandoned its respected monthly magazine for a quarterly that would consume less organizational time and free resources for political work.

It soon became clear that financial capital was being depleted as quickly as moral capital had been. Several months ago society members were informed of debts in the tens of thousands of dollars; the national staff has been halved, and six months passed between the first issue of the quarterly and the second (attributed by members in part to editorial problems and in part to financial woes). The combination of the new initiatives and the failure to diversify income sources from a small number of Eastern benefactors has created a crisis that may put the end to the organization that was once the vanguard of progressive Republican thinking.

Michael MacLeod, executive director of Ripon, now admits that the Nixon endorsement "was a terrible mistake, and it may be representative of a lack of a coherent political policy." In the most lugubrious tones imaginable from an organization that once spunkily held high the moderates' banner, MacLeod added, "We've failed politically—it's a dismal picture. The conservatives have done better despite their efforts because the country and the party are shifting to the right." He termed Republican attempts to reform the party and its national convention procedures "a ghastly joke, like something out of Jean Genet. They're not doing a goddamn thing. The country is 22 or 23 per cent Republican, college kids are 12 per cent Republican, and they're not doing anything about it. The party just doesn't care."

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One way to "do something" is through today's most visible spokesman of Republicanism, the President of the United States. For all the talk of toasted muffins and smiling press secretaries, precious little analysis of Ford's background has been attempted by the press in the year and more since he became a good bet for the White House. There are certainly enough data to analyze —Ford spent more years as a legislator than did any of his predecessors in the Presidency—but the only comments about him involved his role as loyal partisan and his conservatism.

Congressional Quarterly's roll-call analysis shows that Ford's party loyalty and his support of the conservative coalition were not markedly higher than that of the average House Republican. Where Ford does stand out is in his support of the Presidency. During Eisenhower's second term and Nixon's first, the average Republican in the House supported his President 63 per cent of the time on domestic issues; Ford supported the President 78 per cent. On foreign policy issues, Ford stood with GOP Presidents 90 per cent of the time, compared to the 57 per cent showing of his colleagues. Even more significant, Ford's backing of Kennedy and Johnson foreign policies was 20 per cent higher than that of other Republicans.

This support was in keeping with Ford's statement to Congress on August 12 that "I have upheld all our Presi-

HOW MAINE WENT

EVELYN SCRIBNER

Down East in Maine, state lottery billboards, using the abbreviation of Maine as a promotional device, urge the public to Play Me., and winter resorts invite people to Ski Me. Similarly, a New Me. emerged on Election Day when the voters chose what the *Maine Sunday Telegram* called a "Troika" government. It is a three-horse vehicle because the independent gubernatorial candidate, James B. Longley, who fought off the two major party candidates, two other independents and a write-in office seeker to win the office, will be flanked by a Republican state Senate and a Democratic House.

The surprising endorsement of Longley by far-from-apathetic Maine voters was called by Robert Reinhold in *The New York Times*, "perhaps the most astounding political upset of the year, even a decade." As a matter of fact, no independent has won a governorship in any of the states in thirty-seven years.

Longley, who owns one of the largest insurance agencies in Maine, first came to public notice in the state two years ago, when Democratic Governor Curtis asked him to head a nonpolitical management and cost study proposed by the Republican legislature to effect economy in state government. He enlisted fifty businessmen from around the state to investigate each of the state departments for ways to improve efficiency and save taxpayer dollars. The study team came up with 807 recommendations that claimed total possible savings of $23.8 million a year. Longley also pointed to other potential savings of $22 million a year that could be made by eliminating duplication of services. Although many of the recommendations were eventually adopted, those that promised the largest savings were political hot potatoes that neither the Governor nor the legislature was willing to handle.

Nothing in Longley's business executive background had prepared him for the opposition he found to such economies as cutting back two of the University of Maine's more geographically remote four-year campuses to two-year institutions. He took the ensuing furore personally and began to think of bringing his proposals directly to the people. The best way to implement his group's recommendations seemed to be for him to become governor.

Using a slogan that was ridiculed at first, but later became the watchword of his campaign, Longley asked the voters to "Think About It." The major plank in his platform was a pledge to save $250 million over a four-year period (the length of one term). The state's budget for fiscal year 1974-75 is $600 million, with some built-in increases to future budgets, and Longley's promise appealed to thrifty Yankee souls.

At the beginning of his campaign, Longley's adherents consisted of himself, his family, a smattering of business friends and a campaign manager who resigned from a post with United Press International. Somewhere along the way Longley's message did get people "thinking about it," but none of the political experts admitted that he might finish better than a respectable third. The last few days before the election, however, pollsters found him coming on strong. Early on election night, with only four or five tiny precincts reporting, Walter Cronkite predicted Longley's victory.

Longley interpreted his win as a warning to the two major parties. He told a local newspaper that his victory "could very well be the major political story in the country. . . ." Maine's Republican Congressman, William Cohen (of impeachment hearings fame), agreed that Maine had sent a message to the country.

Longley's victory may well strengthen the third-party movement. One Maine political observer wondered aloud whether it was just chance that Longley's campaign director hailed from George Wallace's Alabama. Don Larrabee, *Maine Sunday Telegram* correspondent in Washington, noted that Longley's victory has captured the notice of Eugene McCarthy and his Committee for a Constitutional Presidency, which may go the independent candidate route in 1976.

John Gardner, chairman of Common Cause, is a friend of Longley and was one of those who urged the Governor-elect into politics. Backed by such a relationship with a nationally known independent people's advocate, and by the interest of the McCarthy group, Longley will be watched carefully for the next two years. His success as lead horse of the troika might determine whether a third-party candidate could be a viable alternative to those chosen by the major parties in the nation's bicentennial year. To make an impressive record the politically uncommitted Longley must gain the cooperation of both parties to halt an increase in government spending during these days of raging inflation. If he can do so, as he promised, without sacrificing necessary social programs, the lesson will not be lost on the American electorate.

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dents when they spoke for my country to the world. I believe the Constitution commands this." This absurd stance is typical of get-along-go-along Congressmen; when Ford himself was sworn in as President, GOP Rep. Bill Dickinson of Alabama burst into the House Chamber and said, "Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to announce to the gentlemen in the well and the members present that we have a new Commander in Chief as of right now, and a new President." Dickinson apparently thought he was still in the Navy.

So we should not be surprised when Ford behaves, in substance if not style, like an imperial President, or when in his October 29th press conference he attacked the "runaway Congress" that "does not, at least, pay some attention to their own leadership on both sides of the aisle and to the President of the United States." The only difference between Nixon and Ford is that Nixon was hypocritical, attacking Presidential power when Democrats held the office. Ford wants the same hegemony over foreign policy for himself that he supported for other Presidents, even Democrats.

The one significant area of difference between Ford and his predecessor in terms of party relations is that Ford is not continuing the blatant attempts to realign the parties by courting the South. He deleted a passage in a recent South Carolina campaign speech that stirred up memories of the "veto-proof Congress" that promulgated Reconstruction; it is hard to imagine Spiro Agnew resisting that temptation to wave the rebel flag. Otherwise, Ford is a man of small vision whose faith in Presidential authority promises hard-fought battles with a feisty Congress.

But Ford's words quoted at the outset are worth recalling when evaluating the continuing effect of the 1974 elections. In 1958 and 1964, Republicans lost similar numbers of House members, and in 1960 and 1966 they recaptured about half of the lost seats. Moreover, few of the avengers were the Congressmen who had initially lost the seats. In 1960, those new faces included future party notables like John Ashbrook, Peter Dominick, Robert Ellsworth, Charles Mathias, William Scranton and Robert Stafford. In 1966, the avengers included Tom Railsback, Charles Sandman, William Steiger and Robert Taft, Jr.

This is a warning both to freshman Democrats and to those who think 1974 is the start of a downward spiral for the GOP. There are Republicans in New York, New Jersey, Indiana, Illinois and California who are already eying those lost seats, and in 1976 they will begin to set the tone for the Republican Party for years to come. □

THE 'Z' SCRIPT

ITALY FEARS A COUP

NORMAN BIRNBAUM

Flying from Strasbourg to Rome at the end of October, I landed at Fiumicino when the workers were on strike. A few hours earlier, the police had arrested a picket during a dispute involving only the employees of Pan American and TWA, whereupon everyone else at the airport walked out. The Italian working class is combative; it has every reason to be. Inflation and unemployment are upon it, but the nation's political elite is unresponsive—and incompetent. Most workers vote for either the Communists or the smaller Socialist Party. The recent governmental crisis was instigated by the Right (which in Italy includes the Social Democrats, few in number but well financed) in a successful attempt to eject the Socialists from the coalition which has formed governments—but not quite ruled the country—for a decade. The Socialists now insist on systematic consultation with the Communists and with the unions on national policy. More, in any reconstituted coalition, they wanted to hold either the Ministry of Defense or the Ministry of Interior. They do not trust the Right to defend the Italian Republic against its internal enemies.

That these apprehensions were widely shared, I learned at a literary cocktail party and dinner on my first evening in town. I overheard a conversation between a gentleman and a charming lady journalist. "Surely, you are not going home to sleep? You'd better come to my place." "Not tonight; I don't expect the *coup d'état* until later in the week." In fact, throughout Italy, Communist and Socialist (and not a few Christian Democratic) politicians, trade unionists, journalists, intellectuals and state officials hostile to the Right have for some weeks been sleeping away from home. The Communist Party is still widely criticized on the Left for its reformism, even for its complacency, but one of its leaders has just spoken in uncommonly direct terms. In the event of a *coup d'état*, he declared, millions of Italians will need no instructions; they know what to do. One factor inhibiting such a move in Italy is simple: the Italian Right (and its foreign supporters and paymasters) have good reason to fear that it might not succeed. Many Italians have been encouraged by events in Portugal and Greece. Others, less sanguine, recall that it took forty years to end fascism in Portugal and seven years before Greek democracy could be restored.

Italy is not suffering from just another cabinet crisis, nor are its difficulties entirely economic. The increased cost of oil and the recession in the world economy have of course gravely damaged an economy dependent upon export; the country's reserves are nearly exhausted. But Italy's fundamental problems probably lie elsewhere. It would be easy enough to argue that two types of

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society, two conceptions of Italy, are now in conflict. The one is hierarchical in structure, traditionalist in values, the country of peasants and landlords, of the Catholic Church, of a sclerotic and bureaucratic state—a population of spiritual *rentiers,* living off an imagined past. The other country is open in texture, modern in values, the Italy of entrepreneurs, engineers and skilled workers, a part of Western rather than Southern Europe. When the Italian Right failed to abrogate the divorce law, did not *La Stampa,* the Turin daily owned by the Fiat interests, proclaim in a headline that Italy was a modern country?

However, history, and in particular Italian history, is not that simple. The cultural conflicts of Italy are profound, but its social antagonisms are no less deep. An advanced sector of Italian industry is indeed integrated with international capitalism. American, French and German firms have colonized the economy. The most efficient Italian corporations (like ENI, the state petrochemical trust, or Fiat) are themselves multinational in operation—with the Italian south the second nation they have penetrated. Italy, in this respect, manifests a classical pattern of conflict between workers and capitalists.

In Italy, however, class conflict in production is superimposed upon exploitation by the state itself. The Italian state defies easy analysis. Clientelism and parasitism, as well as cretinous inefficiency, characterize its operations. Education, health, transport, the public services in general, have long since gone from bad to disastrous. With some 40 per cent of the economy in the state sector, much of the productive potential of the country is blocked by a system which is its own caricature. The Christian Democratic Party treats state industry as if it were an ecclesiastical benefice. The Church has suffered a vertiginous decline in influence, but the political party ostensibly allied with it is the repository of the earthly forms of grace: jobs and money. Meanwhile, the more powerful of the managers in the state sector are quite like their counterparts in the private one: they buy and sell politicians, public officials, the media. Unless and until there is structural reform in the state, Italian capitalism cannot compete on the world market and Italian socialism remains an illusion.

There are still unbought elements in Italian life: a critical intelligentsia (which includes some higher civil servants) and the unions. The intellectuals and the workers have in fact established a remarkable alliance. The unions' long-term strategy envisages an increase in national productivity by raising labor costs. Marxist union leaders (many of them from the universities) have not hesitated to cite the example of American economic growth. But the governmental parties, despite the increasingly reluctant presence of the Socialists in the coalition, have never worked for social conditions that would encourage rational and just economic development. The unions have emerged as the single political force, apart from the Communist Party, capable of challenging the rapaciousness of a political elite which is by now thoroughly discredited. The Communist-Socialist, Catholic and Republican unions are now negotiating a merger; they are already quite unified in their politics. The German Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, is reported to have complained that they are too ideological—by which that technocrat poorly disguised as a Social Democrat seems to mean that they are too close to the Communist Party. With the Communists and their allies, who together represent a third of the electorate, permanently excluded from government, the politicizing of the unions is inevitable. In any event, the interpenetration of state and economy in Italy permits no neat division between politics and production.

For a while, some months ago, it appeared that Italy was moving toward a new political alliance—of the productive forces of the country against those who were simply draining it. The governor of the Bank of Italy, Guido Carli, declared that the only way to associate the labor force with the national effort to overcome the economic crisis was to bring the Communists into the government. Gianni Agnelli, head of the family that owns Fiat, indicated his willingness to align himself with the Socialists and the unions (an indirect way of working with the Communists). Since then, Carli has taken the standard anti-inflationary line, one which would make the workers (and the employed middle class) pay. And Agnelli has backed away from his earlier opening to the left. When I visited Turin, I found not a few persons around Fiat who were disappointed by this withdrawal. Agnelli is from Piemonte, and the Piemontese are the New Englanders of Italy, known for their public sense in a nation in which not everybody has it. The most plausible explanation given to me for his shift was that strenuous foreign pressure had been brought to bear. True, no doubt, but perhaps a bit facile. Some of the younger industrialists have said that they cannot see how, in the absence of a settlement with the Left, Agnelli can make good his stated intention to produce housing, schools and health-care delivery systems. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of Fiats are unsold.

Democracy in Italy, then, has yet to solve the question of Italy's place in the world economy. The perennial problems of the south and the exclusion of the working class from government contribute to political immobility. The discontents of many, the frustrated ambitions of not a few, flow into a Fascist stream which is far from underground. The Fascists are not strong as a popular movement; they polled 9 per cent of the vote in the last elections. However, they express an authoritarian and regressive temper which is also evident on the right wing of Christian Democracy. (Fanfani, whose recent attempt to restore the Center-Left coalition might have succeeded had he really wished it to do so, was himself a Fascist ideologue under Mussolini, allegedly took funds from the American Embassy, led the struggle against the divorce law, and is the political leader of those who have looted the Italian Republic.) What is frightening about the Fascists is the sympathy, even complicity, they enjoy amongst the Christian Democrats, the state bureaucracy, the judiciary and prosecuting attorneys, the police and the armed forces.

For some years, the Right's intended route of march has been clear. To counter "disorder," a strong government would have to be installed—either by an electoral shift to the right, political manipulation within the system, or a *coup d'état.* The electoral shift has not taken place, the political manipulation is still going on, and the threat

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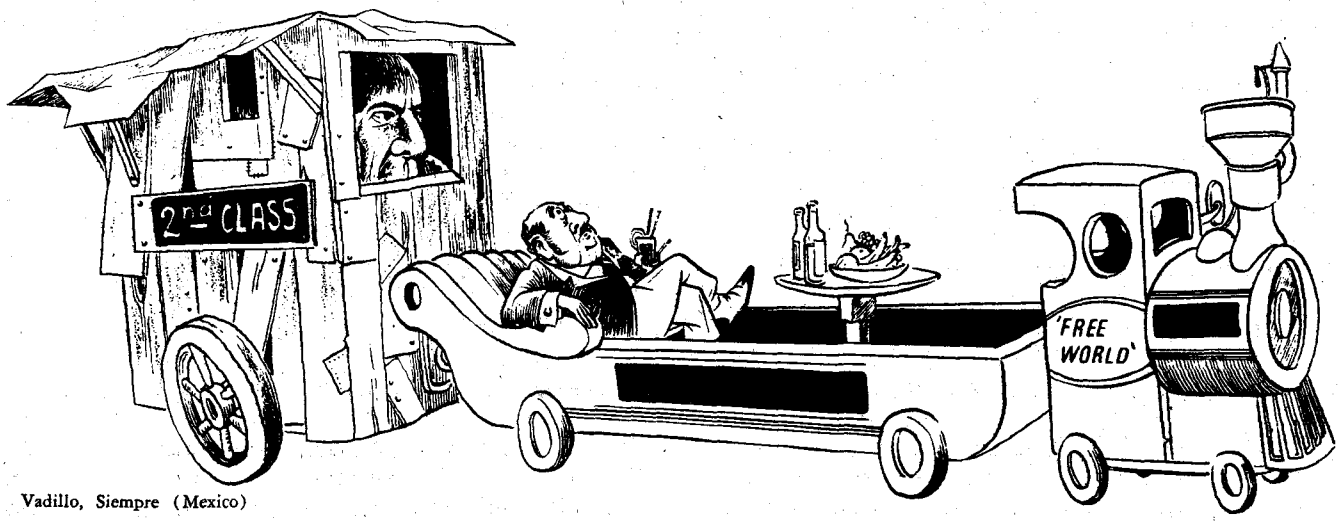
of a *coup d'état* is real. One difficulty has been overcome: since the Left (and above all, the unions and the Communist Party) did not oblige by providing enough "disorder," the Fascists have resorted to terror. Much of what we know about this campaign, and about the plotting for a *coup d'état* in the armed forces, comes from leaks to the Italian press by state officials loyal to the Republic—and fearful that there will be an official cover-up of the conspiracies beginning to be unraveled by some of the prosecuting attorneys. I thought of writing that Watergate is a decade and a half old in Italy, but the correct analogy is different: it is a larger version of the script for *Z*.

Some things are now evident. Many of the Fascist gangs were infiltrated by agents of military intelligence—who may well have been under instructions to encourage terrorism rather than check it. The general who was recently retired as chief of military intelligence has been arrested for conspiring against the state. He claims that he was made the scapegoat for a conspiracy which involves many other senior officers and even some former ministers. Perhaps, but the reason for his indictment and arrest is that a younger prosecuting attorney refused to accept the Christian Democratic Defense Minister's edited version of the background to some of the recent plots, and—to the consternation of many in the Italian political elite and the armed forces—subpoenaed his files. There has been one recent gain. The government has been forced to admit that plotting against the Republic extended into the highest reaches of the state apparatus—an acknowledgment which would be more reassuring if it did not coincide with a major political crisis. Some Italians have demonstrated their sense of the interweavings of contemporary history. When the press reported that the Greek generals and colonels responsible for the Greek dictatorship had been jailed and indicted for murder and treason, hundreds of readers clipped the articles and mailed them to the Italian Chiefs of Staff.

In the midst of this frenzy, I had a talk with one of the leaders of the Communist Party. The talk was off the record, but I can convey its texture. I was struck by my interlocutor's interest in and admiration for American democracy (he'd like very much to visit the United States, he said). He seemed rather deliberately to underplay America's covert role in Italian politics. The Embassy and the CIA, he declared, would get nowhere if the Italian Right did not cooperate; thus, the Italian Right was his party's primary antagonist. I was not surprised to hear him talk of the party's long-term political role as being an educational one—the language of Gramsci. The man I talked with was of an older generation, the son of a bourgeois democratic politician murdered by the Fascists. That is another peculiarity of Italian history: the fourth generation of descendants of Garibaldi and Mazzini are found, more often than not, in the parties of the Left.

The Left is, then, the repository of Italy's Jacobin tradition. Many in that tradition take it for granted that the Italian Communist Party is not only very indigenous, but that it has about completed its transformation to democratic reformism. Some, indeed, think it has gone too far by announcing its willingness to seek a "historical compromise" with the Christian Democrats. This would entail a coalition, formal or informal, with most of the factions in that party. The Communists even offered to negotiate on the divorce law, to avoid the referendum which in the end humiliated the Christian Democrats. Many in the Communist Party and in the small but influential groups to its left (like the Manifesto group, which publishes one of Europe's liveliest daily newspapers) oppose the compromise. They think that the Communists, Socialists and the Christian Democratic Left will shortly be strong enough to evict Italy's superannuated bourgeois politicians from the ministerial chairs they are forever exchanging.

It takes two to compromise. Most Christian Democratic leaders are, or claim to be, adamantly opposed to any arrangement with the Communists. Indeed, some hope to pressure the Socialists into breaking regional and local alliances with the Communists. The governmental crisis was opened by the Social Democratic leader Tanassi, who demanded that the Socialists break these local alliances and that they abandon their governmental role as spokesmen for the unions. Tanassi's solution to Italy's problem is to hold a general election. Nearly everyone in Italian politics professes not to fear new elections and nearly everyone fears them. A recent poll indicates that the Christian Democratic vote might decline from a third to a quarter of the electorate, and that the Communists could emerge as the largest single party—going from 27



Vadillo, Siempre (Mexico)

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to 33 per cent of the vote. The Social Democrats apparently hope to double their present 5 per cent of the vote by collecting support on the extreme Right. The senior Social Democrat, former President Saragat, has opposed Tanassi: he is adamantly opposed to elections. Indeed, many Communists, Socialists and moderates fear that the electoral campaign, which would take five months, could hollow out a vacuum of power which might well provoke a coup. On the face of the matter, it is a puzzle that Tanassi, a spokesman for a small party, should wreck the equilibrium of a coalition which has lasted more than a decade.

Here the going becomes murky. Tanassi was for many years Minister of Defense; the arrested chief of intelligence was his protégé. In January of 1974, while he was in office, the armed forces and the police engaged in a civil war exercise which resembled nothing so much as a rehearsal for a coup. Questioned about it a day later, Tanassi angrily denied that anything had happened about which he was uninformed. On the hypothesis that he ordered or agreed to the exercise, his denial may well be true. Saragat has now declared that Tanassi, when Minister of Defense, failed in his constitutional duty of informing the Presidency about the plots against the state. Perhaps more light is shed on the situation by Tanassi's close relationship with the American Embassy. The American Ambassador is John Volpe, former governor of Massachusetts. The influential Italian weekly, *L'Espresso,* has just carried an unflattering portrait of His Excellency under the title, *"Por favore non chiamatemi John Golpe."* (*Golpe* is not Italian but Spanish for *coup*: the Italians are bitter about thinking of their country as a banana republic. The translation reads: "Please don't call me John Golpe.") Volpe saw some politicians on the eve of the fall of the government, and is known to have expressed his view that the Socialists should be ejected from the coalition and that new elections should be held. While the U.S. Congress is holding hearings about our role in Chile, it might do some anticipatory work on Italy by recalling Volpe for questioning. It would be instructive to know something about his relationships with the Italian banker, Sindona, who is now fleeing arrest on charges of embezzlement. Sindona, who owned the Franklin National Bank, at one point offered to make large contributions to the Nixon re-election campaign. In Italy, he did not stop at financing politicians: he met with some of the army officers under indictment for plotting a coup. (The prosecuting attorneys have leaked to the press the information that an American general and a CIA agent were also involved in these conspiracies.) The name of Graham Martin, now U.S. Ambassador to Saigon, has been mentioned: he was at the Embassy in Rome.

In the last analysis, the Italians will no doubt know how to defend themselves. As I write, Aldo Moro has formed a Christian Democratic government with some members from the small Republican Party. Moro was the one Christian Democrat who was acceptable to the Left during the last Presidential election; for that reason, he was vetoed by his own party. Moro had proposed special arrangements for consulting with the unions. However, the new government is a shabby compromise. The Christian Democratic leaders who backed Moro have been relegated to less important cabinet posts. The Defense Minister who finally sent files about the military plotters to the judiciary has been removed from office at the insistence of the (as yet unindicted) admirals and generals. A Fanfani henchman has been made Minister of the Interior. The Socialists and Social Democrats say they will support the government; the Communists find its program represents no change and will vote against it. Meanwhile, yet higher officers and more influential politicians are being investigated in connection with the plots against the state. What is of special interest to Americans is the evidence, however fragmentary, that our government is again backing the Right in a foreign country—by means that include encouragement to those planning the overthrow of democratic institutions. Watergate showed that this strategy and these tactics eventually came home, to be used against ourselves. The Italian Left, in assuming the defense of the Italian Republic, may be helping us to defend our own. □

RACE, HOMICIDE & THE NEWS

PHIL BLAKE

Chicago

Marilyn Herron, a grammar school student on Chicago's South Side, disappeared from her home one evening in March last year. The 10-year-old black girl's body was found the next morning under a bench in a park near her home. She had been sexually molested and strangled. Despite the fact that the Chicago press, like the press in most cities, makes a habit of covering child murders with thoroughness and fanfare, Marilyn Herron's death was almost ignored. There was no mention of the crime in the final editions of the *Tribune* or the *Daily News*; *Chicago Today* ran a brief story well back in the paper. Only the *Sun-Times,* which tries hard for news and circulation in the black community, treated the murder as a serious crime.

The lack of interest in Marilyn Herron's death was not an unusual oversight: in Chicago, blacks are far more likely than whites to be victims of crimes of violence, yet you wouldn't know it from the news, which barely mentions crimes in which the victims are black.

For example:

John Henderson, the 63-year-old deacon of a Baptist Church on the South Side, was shot to death in an abortive robbery as he prepared the church for a prayer meeting.

Phil Blake, now a free-lance writer in Chicago, covered many murders when he was a regular reporter for one of the city's papers.

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Lenya Ford, 22 months old, was removed from a partially filled bathtub in her home and brought to a South Side hospital where she was pronounced dead. Doctors and police found bruises and abrasions on the girl's face and body and immediately classified the case as child abuse.

Like the Herron murder, there are aspects of these crimes that would ordinarily make them newsworthy to most editors. Crime in an incongruous setting, like murder in a church, normally rates mention if only because of the irony involved. And child abuse cases have drawn an avalanche of news coverage. Yet the media reacted to the Henderson and Ford murders with a yawn.

Crime news plays a big role in forming public attitudes. A strong tendency to cover crimes with white victims and ignore those with black victims distorts the broad picture the public gets on the subject—specifically by making whites feel especially threatened.

In fact, when the Community Renewal Society recently issued a computerized study of homicide in Chicago during 1973, two key findings caused general public surprise: nearly 70 per cent of the murder victims in the city were blacks, and only 15 per cent of all murders were across racial lines.

To compare the picture the public received about murders with what actually occurred, I checked Chicago police reports on homicides during the first three months of 1973 against coverage of the crimes in the final edition of the *Chicago Tribune* (generally considered to carry the most news of any Chicago paper). During that period there were 215 murders in the city, and fifty-one got some coverage in the *Tribune*. Twelve were described in stories that ran on pages 1 through 5.

While only 20 per cent of the murder victims during this period were white, nearly half of the fifty-one murder stories were about white victims. Up front in the paper, where readership is high, the imbalance was even stronger —two-thirds of the murder stories on pages 1 through 5 involved white victims.

To state the statistics another way, a white person slain during this period had a one-in-two chance of being mentioned in the paper, and a one-in-seven chance of winding up on pages 1 through 5. But the chances of a black victim making it into the paper was one in seven, and of winding up on pages 1 through 5, one in 100.

From this it would seem that the public could draw simple and erroneous conclusions about crime: middle-class whites are the most frequent victims of murder. In fact, as the Community Renewal Society survey showed, most violent crime is confined to poor blacks—poor black victims attacked by other poor blacks in their neighborhood.

This situation underscores the importance of the decision-making mechanics by which a story gets into a paper. Normally, the first report of a murder comes in the form of a sketchy notification, which includes basic information about the victims's identity, plus anything known about the assailant or motive. With an eye for the elements of a good news story (money or sex, for instance), an editor decides whether to cover the crime and if so the length and importance of the story to be written.

If the crime seems commonplace (as some murders do in Chicago, where 864 occurred in 1973) the editor will probably decide to ignore it or run a squib on the obituary page. Obviously, these decisions cater to the public's reading interest. However, race should play no part in the editor's decision of what is newsworthy. An attack on a child, a killing in a church, a child abuse case should always be covered or never be covered. When the circumstances are similar, the drama or pathos is similar.

Also, newspaper editors should perhaps consider whether every local murder shouldn't receive some mention, if only in a column briefly listing the circumstances of each killing that occurs each day. This gives the public a more accurate picture of crime and would conform with a newspaper's basic responsibility to give a balanced account of the events of the day. □

CON ED CONS THE PRESS

DAVID KUSNET

Most New Yorkers were less than satisfied customers after the state legislature agreed last May to buy two unfinished Consolidated Edison power plants for $500 million. But consumers would have been ready to pull out their electric cords, turn off the lights, and vote out every seat warmer in Albany if their daily newspapers had told the full story of the Con Ed bailout.

Part of the untold tale began to emerge during the slow news days following the September Democratic primary as two state agencies released their findings on Con Ed operations. The Public Service Commission staff reported that Con Ed had shown a clear profit since last May, when the power plant sale was approved in order to pump cash into the purportedly impoverished utility. Meanwhile, state Power Authority auditors revealed that the two plants required some $130 million more in repairs than had been estimated in May—and that the existing structures were actually worth only $382 million.

Of New York City's three daily newspapers, only the *Times* reported Con Ed's surprising profit picture—on an inside page. And neither the *Times*, the *Post*, nor the *Daily News* followed up the story with an investigation of how Con Ed was making money when it had claimed months earlier to be on the verge of bankruptcy.

The Power Authority report questioning the original price tag on the two generating plants made all three dailies. But a front-page *Times* story, under the by-line of

David Kusnet is a newspaper reporter whose special fields are energy and housing problems.

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Peter Kihss, failed to explore why the value of the plants had been dropped $118 million from the original $500 million. The answer was in the text of the report, but not quoted by the *Times*, the *News*, or the *Post*. Among other problems in Con Ed's Astoria plant, the auditors found "inadequate storage practices, lack of cleanliness during assembly, and unsatisfactory construction processes."

Here's how *Times* reporter David Andelman led his story on the state legislature's approval of the $500-million bailout:

> *Albany, May 16*—The State Legislature voted early today to buy two Consolidated Edison power plants, providing $500 million in assistance to the financially pressed utility. It marked the first time that a state had taken such action to preserve a major public utility.

Andelman's story exemplifies the three faults common to coverage of Con Ed in the New York dailies:

(1) Take the utility's claim at face value. If Con Ed says it is "financially pressed," then it is—and the bailout is necessary "to preserve a major public utility."

(2) Bury embarrassing facts. Not until the sixth paragraph does Andelman describe the plants as "now under construction," a polite phrase for the disarray observed by the Power Authority auditors.

(3) Don't ask the obvious questions. For example, how much would it cost to buy the entire Con Ed system?

Andelman didn't ask that question, nor did his colleagues on the *Post* and *News* throughout the entire bailout controversy. In fact, at the time the legislature voted, the two unfinished plants—sold to the people of New York for $500 million—cost five-sixths of the current New York Stock Exchange value of all Con Ed stock! Not one daily pegged a story on the contradiction between a price tag of some $600 million on all Con Ed stock and a bill of $500 million for two unfinished plants.

Con Ed seems the unlikeliest of candidates for sacred cow in New York's press. Although few editors care to question the integrity of a company whose directors include John Doar and Grayson Kirk, fewer still would order reporters to hold off on probes of the most cordially disliked utility in the nation. Con Ed benefits less from favoritism than from split-level reporting—excellent consumer coverage, adequate political analysis and abysmal financial journalism.

Stressing the consumer angle, the *News* ran extensive reports on Con Ed bill-payer gripes, including those of all-electric home owners whose Con Ed charges exceeded their mortgage payments. The *Post* gave full coverage to the political opposition to the bailout proposal by consumer and environmental groups. But, in the lone effort to explain Con Ed's financial problems, the *Times* ran a series that neglected to explore the basic questions of ownership and control, profitability and priorities.

A good press for Con Ed has been the major accomplishment of board chairman Charles Luce, formerly Senator Jackson's Senatorial campaign manager and later Under Secretary of the Interior. Luce came to Con Ed in 1967 after his predecessors, mostly company lifers, had been attacked as incompetents in the pages of *Fortune* and *The Wall Street Journal*. He arrived at the utility to find a public relations department less oriented to obtaining friendly media coverage than to winning favors from City Hall. Several staffers, in fact, were trying to put in the fix at, rather than for, Con Ed. Months after Luce's appointment, a $30,000-a-year public relations consultant and a vice president for public relations emerged as figures in a conspiracy with former Tammany Hall boss Carmine DeSapio to shake down Con Ed. (See *A Percentage of the Take* by Walter Goodman.)

Last spring, when Luce became an applicant for welfare, the Con Ed chief's appointment book included at least one chat with Andelman. The *Times* reporter cited the interview in a two-part article which appeared the week that Con Ed's bailout campaign went public.

Andelman's leads for his stories were:

> *March 31*—The Consolidated Edison Company has some of the most serious financial and operating difficulties of any utility in the nation, according to state and regulatory officials, Wall Street analysts, and present and former employees of the corporation. And they say there is every indication the problems are likely to become worse before they improve.
>
> *April 1*—Consolidated Edison's hope for the future, its vast program of streamlining and modernizing its plants and equipment that the utility has long counted on to "turn the company around" in the nineteen-seventies and nineteen-eighties, is in serious trouble.

Hardly a sensational exposé, this information was apparently obtained from the six sources Andelman cites by name (and they could pass for the horde of informants hinted at in the March 31st lead). They are: Luce; Harvard Business School Prof. George Cabot Lodge; Public Service Commission Chairman Joseph C. Swidler and staff economist Eric Leighton; S.A. Barnes, analyst for the First Boston Corp., Con Ed's investment bankers; and James G. Stark, a partner in Lehman Brothers and a former Con Ed treasurer. Not an environmentalist or a consumer advocate in the lot!

Two days after the *Times* series concluded, Con Ed announced that its problems in raising capital had forced the cancellation of $40 million worth of planned construction projects. The day this announcement appeared in the papers, Luce was in Albany for an on-the-record meeting with Governor Wilson to plead for state purchase of the two incompleted plants. In his April 3rd story on Con Ed's formal announcement of its fiscal woes, Andelman gloated: "Sunday, *The New York Times* reported that Con Edison was in serious financial difficulty, particularly in relation to its ability to raise new capital. However, today's statement by Mr. Luce was the first time the company had acknowledged such difficulties and said that such problems could affect its ability to continue to supply electrical service." But that same day Judith Bender, Albany correspondent for *Newsday*, reported that Luce had been quietly lobbying for a bailout since January.

By treating Con Ed's plea of poverty as unquestioned fact, the *Times* had enlisted in Luce's lobbying campaign, while missing the story that the drive had long been under way and was about to shift into high gear. And Andelman boasted that his stories had represented an exclusive!

Luce later repeated the conclusion of Andelman's series: Con Ed's problem is to raise funds to build new generating facilities while electrical power consumption—

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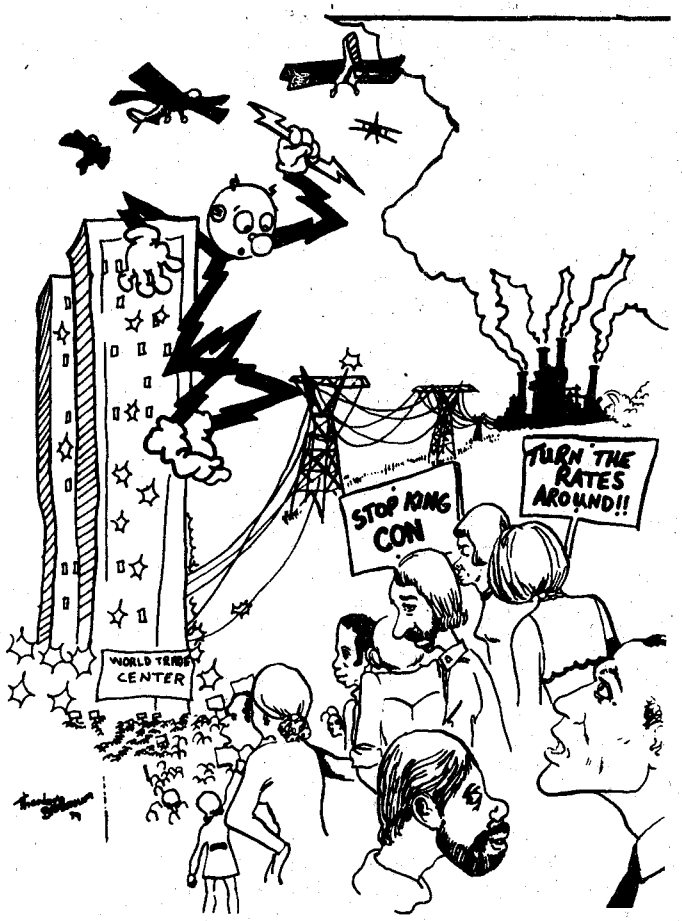

Environmental Action Foundation

and hence income—remains stable. Moreover, Andelman-Luce maintain, environmentalists have added to the utility's expenses by successfully stalling construction plans. Earnings, therefore, are painfully low, and the state must kick in, say, $500 million. Does the story stand up?

At its Manhattan headquarters at 14 Irving Place, near Union Square, Con Ed's library contains back copies of annual reports, filled with the information the utility entrusts to its stockholders and the general public. The names of its board of directors are there, along with sales figures and announcements of advertising campaigns—some embarrassing for Con Ed today, such as the promotion of electric heating during the mid-1960s. A mile or so downtown, at 26 Federal Plaza, is the regional office of the Federal Power Commission, where any citizen may inspect information Con Ed excludes from its annual reports—the names and holdings of its ten largest stockholders, figures on its outstanding debt, and data on generation capacity, including peak loads.

These figures tell the story of a utility driven to expand, not to meet demand but in order to increase its rate base, forced to raise capital in order to finance that expansion, and compelled to raise still more funds in order to repay its debt. Whatever its own profit picture, Con Ed serves as a money-making machine for the banks that hold large blocks of its stock and lend it money at high interest rates.

Andelman to the contrary, Con Ed's problem seems to be the gap between demand and today's generating capacity, not between demand and future capital needs. Last year, Con Ed had the capacity to send out 75 billion kilowatt hours, but it sold only 31 billion. And revenues from sales of the 31 billion kilowatt hours had to generate an 8 per cent return on the investment represented by the 75 billion kilowatt-hour capacity. These figures indicate that Con Ed maintains the year around a plant sufficient to meet the peak needs of the system on the hottest summer days. Why? Because utilities are guaranteed a profit of 8 per cent of their total investment.

The Andelman series omitted from its brief discussion of "management errors" Con Ed's repeated refusal to buy cheap power from upstate for use during periods of peak load. In 1958, Con Ed turned down a chance to purchase 1.5 million kilowatts every hour from Niagara Falls. In 1964, the utility rejected a similar offer from the Churchill Falls power project in Canada. Together, the hydroelectric source would have supplied half of Con Ed's needs, yet neither was mentioned in the *Times* series.

Andelman alludes briefly to Con Ed's $2.8 billion in capital debt outstanding. He neglects to explore whether Con Ed ever pays off its debt and who profits from the utility's borrowing policies. To pick half a decade from Con Ed annual reports, during the period 1964 to 1969, net income increased from $100 million to $127 million, but debt payments increased 45 per cent. According to Con Ed's prospectus for its recent 9⅛ per cent bond issue, the utility will use part of the funds to pay back $100 million of a 2⅝ per cent bond issue. One can conclude that Con Ed badly needs capital to pay its back debts, as well as to build power plants.

The day before legislative leaders of both parties approved the power plant purchase, Con Ed eliminated quarterly dividend payments for the first time since 1885. The *Times* reported the move on April 24: "The Consolidated Edison Company, plagued by soaring fuel costs and the effects of energy conservation, yesterday suspended payment of its quarterly dividend, something the company had never previously done since it started paying them in 1885."

Five months later, the September *Fortune* ("Con Ed Makes Luce Run," by Irwin Ross) reported, for the first time in either the business or daily press, that Con Ed's skipped dividend payment would have cost a paltry $28 million. Industry sources questioned whether Con Ed couldn't have scraped together that much money, and not triggered a wave of panic selling of its stock. Unless, of course, Con Ed was deliberately fostering panic. The day after the missed payment was announced, Luce told Albany leaders that Con Ed was "bordering on the same type of receivership as the Penn Central case," according to a *Time* account of the meeting.

Was the skipped dividend a financial necessity or a public relations ploy? No newspaper investigated the decision-making process at 14 Irving Place, although a failing company often has as many leakers in key positions as does a sinking national administration. The *Times* reported on April 24 that "the dividend move came as a complete surprise."

The newspapers accepted Con Ed's claim that the life savings of multitudes of widows were threatened by the

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utility's troubles, while ignoring the role of the bank trust departments as managers of large chunks of utility stock. *The Wall Street Journal* of June 5 headlined a front-page story: "It's the Elderly Who Suffer—Typical Con Ed Shareholder Is Retired." The *News* ran a UPI story on May 12 which revealed that "most of Con Ed's 61.5 million common shares are held by private investors."

Which, of course, is true also of every major publicly held corporation, including Exxon, Pan Am and Penn Central. Patterns of corporate control are set by institutional investors holding as little as 5 per cent of the voting stock, seats on the board of directors, and control over the lines of credit. An examination of Con Ed submissions to the Federal Power Commission reveals that First National City Bank, Chase Manhattan Bank and Morgan Guaranty Trust has each held some 5 per cent of Con Ed common stock, under a variety of trust fund accounts, during the past decade. As of last December 31, eight banks held $64 million in Con Ed notes outstanding. Con Ed board members having connections with major banks include William S. Beinecke, a director of Manufacturers Hanover; Richard S. Perkins, a former director of First National City; and William S. Renchard, chairman of the executive committee of Chemical Bank.

Andelman, in his March 31st article, suggested that institutional investors are now pulling out of Con Ed. Yet no newspaper considered the possibility that the banks' previous commitments are being rescued as the state becomes the utility's new source of capital.

To explain Con Ed's continuing troubles, the dailies cited the utility's high city real estate taxes although Con Ed paid no federal taxes in 1972, skyrocketing fuel charges, although the costs are passed on to the consumer, and problems in collecting overdue bills, although customers can be disconnected with a month's notice. Among reporters, Bruce Drake of the *News* deserves credit for uncovering a state report which revealed that Con Ed "lost 9.02 per cent of all its electricity and 7.45 per cent of all its natural gas in 'unaccounted for' ways last year."

But the press failed to follow up four obvious lines of investigation:

(1) Con Ed's Board of Directors. The Public Service Commission staff suggested a study of Con Ed board members who hold directorships in companies that do business with the utility, but the investigation has remained dormant. Testimony before the PSC on March 29 revealed that Luce is on the board of Metropolitan Life Insurance Co., which was paid $10,295,015 last year. William S. Renchard sits on the board of Amerada Hess Oil Co., which received $53,090,279 in 1973. Grayson Kirk of the Con Ed board is also a trustee of International Business Machines, which did $7,212,618 in business with the utility last year.

(2) The locus of power. Buried in the *Times* morgue is a strong hint as to who runs Con Ed. In an April 12, 1970 profile of Luce, Susan Brownmiller writes that he was hired by two board members representing First National City Bank, "the heavy bank in Con Ed's financial relationships." The two presumably were Richard S. Perkins, a First National City director in 1967, and Frederick M. Eaton, a partner in the law firm of Shearman and Sterling, which represents both bank and utility. First National City Bank's influence in Con Ed extends to management of an employee benefit fund for the utility, according to a Ralph Nader study group report *(Citibank* by David Leinsdorf and Donald Etra).

(3) The invisible yardsticks. That Con Ed's rates are the highest in the nation is acknowledged by all three dailies, but reported in depth only by James Norman in the March 14th *Post.* No newspaper made the more damaging comparison between Con Ed rates and costs of producing power independently in New York City. However, two cooperative housing developments—Rochdale Village in Queens and Warbasse Houses in Brooklyn—generate electricity in their own power plants. The United Housing Foundation estimates the cost at 2.3¢ a kilowatt hour, compared to the 4.9¢-an-hour rate the projects would pay if they bought their power from Con Ed. The low cost of producing power at these developments allowed Co-op City in the Bronx to bargain a special low rate from Con Ed when the utility refused to provide backup service for a separate power system in the giant housing project. United Housing Foundation officials believe Con Ed feared the creation within its service area of a large power system that might provide a yardstick for utility rates. Yet Andelman's series depicted the special Co-op City rate as a "management error."

(4) Con Ed's future plans. After the skipped dividend, investors ran away from Con Ed and lenders wrote off the utility as an unacceptable risk. Luce has been quoted repeatedly as predicting that the state may have to buy the remaining plants, presumably at prices far exceeding the value of Con Ed's stock. The *Times,* in fact, has editorially endorsed the prospect that the state will operate Con Ed's generating system while the private utility continues to sell New Yorkers their power. Con Ed would become an energy middleman.

Following the Penn Central bailout, the Lockheed loan and the prospect of similar favors for Pan Am and Franklin National Bank, the chances look good that American industries will become wards of the state. And, judging by the coverage which sophisticated newspapers gave to the bailout of the nation's most unpopular utility, we'll read about future rip-offs on the financial pages the day after they're approved. □

LETTERS *(Continued from page 578)*

Perhaps there *are* people who approach Dr. Comfort's book (which is in my opinion not to be confused with the other and vastly inferior "technical operating manuals of sex" on the market) in the belief, as Elliott suggests, that "acquiring the technique of producing orgasms is a lot more comfortable than acquiring the wisdom of love," but that is definitely not the spirit in which *Joy of Sex* is presented.

It is my personal opinion and experience that a sound understanding of one's own sexuality and of one's partner's sexuality provides a considerably better foundation for "the wisdom of love" than demure fumbling and mystic evasions. It was my previous understanding that the editorial stance of *The Nation* generally favors the concept that knowledge and understanding is preferable to ignorance and bemusement! *David Ritchie*

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

Joyce Carol Oates's Women

CONSTANCE AYERS DENNE

Joyce Carol Oates's special achievement is her ability to reduce contemporary American social reality to liberating fictions. Her resources are courage and a knowledge of self and the literary past. Open and receptive to what is, Oates sees the present as a variation of what has already been, and by reducing "now" to familiar fictions, she tames, civilizes and, through the catharsis provided by her art, educates.

Oates believes strongly in the authority of the individual's experience of reality. Not one to confuse behavior, or what one does, with identity, or who one is, she defines experience as a process in which external reality impinges significantly not only upon the conscious life of the individual but upon the unconscious as well. Life is a series of encounters, each of which has the potential to make the unconscious more accessible. The truly human life requires continual growth, which in turn depends upon the individual's ability to integrate a new experience into the total personality. (More often than not, however, in an effort to maintain equilibrium, one simply denies or resists the healthful disintegrating effects of new experiences, and such reactions lead either to stagnation or to "madness.") Each state of integrity, albeit temporary, reveals more, but one can never fully understand the self, for the learning process is unending.

Oates's fictions, products of her own descent into the abyss, are designed, like all generous art, to humanize and make whole. Although Oates has been regarded with suspicion because of the violence of her subject matter, the writer is psychologically healthy, and her art remarkably sane. She informs and makes meaningful the facts that assault us daily in the newspapers. For example, *Them* (1969), a naturalistic novel of life in a Detroit slum, shocks only because it is perceived as fiction, and this, of course, is its value. This constitutes its ability to liberate. As a news story or case history, it would be absorbed easily enough by sensibilities inured to misery, and catharsis would be impossible.

The fearless commitment to go wherever she must go emotionally, demonstrated in *Them*, characterizes all of her half-dozen novels and seventy or more short stories. She has, moreover, the enhanced limits of the well-exercised. There is nothing she will not feel, and by virtue of this natural faculty she is enormously womanly. Oates, an artist whose sex opens her to significant levels of awareness, is as conscious of being a woman as she is of being an artist. In fact, she synthesizes both modes of perception in her art. Her artistic method is so much a part of her being that she frequently uses physical analogies to explain it. In the preface to *Them*, for example, she describes in sexual terms her encounter with the materials of the novel: "Their lives pressed upon mine . . . their world . . . entered me with tremendous power, and in a sense the novel wrote itself." It was a birth without labor, as if the author were an automatic instrument of some hidden natural force.

Oates's method is related in another way to her sex. In her collection of short stories, *Marriages and Infidelities* (1972), there is one entitled "The Dead" in which the central character, a writer named Ilena Williams, explains her latest work, "a series of short stories in honor of certain dead writers with whom she felt a kinship," an explanation that might serve as Oates's own for the very collection in which the story appears: "I want to honor the dead by reimagining their works, by reimagining their obsessions . . . in a way marrying them, joining them as a woman joins a man . . . spiritually and erotically." Her work, then, is a woman artist's self-conscious act of love, sometimes humorous, always serious.

But it is also more. In the same story, "The Dead," Ilena Williams says of herself: "I don't exist as an individual but only as a completion of a tradition, the end of something, not the best part of it but only the end." It will be recalled that in his essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Eliot wrote: "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead." There is no more appropriate aesthetic principle than this by which to understand and to evaluate the art of Oates. Having absorbed the shaping myths of the Greek and Judeo-Christian traditions, of Western literature and of the American experience, Oates both resurrects and domesticates them in her fiction, providing a link between the past and present, between the collective unconscious and modern life. Putting us in touch with the collective unconscious, she reveals the primitive meaning and, therefore, the humanity of contemporary life, for the vital source of all action is the unconscious life of the race itself. But she is not simply writing "clever art," that is, "art based upon cultural knowledge of earlier art." Her art is "deadly serious and wants to absolutely re-create and reinterpret the world." Her notion of bringing back to life is closely allied with the artist's special mission of bringing *to* life. At the end of the tradition, she is creating a new beginning, which is very intimately related to her consciousness as a woman and as an artist.

Oates's most recent novel, *Do With Me What You Will* (1973), is unquestionably related to the women's movement in America. It is dedicated to Patricia Hill Burnett, a member of NOW's national board, and its subject is the raising of a young woman's consciousness and her liberation. Elena, the central character of *Do With Me What You Will*, unlike so many fictional women whose quest for selfhood ends in suicide, madness or marriage, breaks through to a higher level of awareness and, newly integrated, affirms not only what she wants but also how she will get it. Her new-found freedom and its direction are of course historically conditioned, a solution that does not make the novel popular with more radical feminists. Oates, however, is neither an idealist nor an ideologist, yet it is not surprising that having chosen to make liberation her subject, she sought to dramatize it in a woman. Women are at the present time more interesting to her than men. She believes that "men have a far more difficult time . . . existing, trying to measure up to the absurd standards of 'masculinity' in our culture

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and in nature," and that women are more likely consciously to feel the need for self-emancipation. Less locked into roles, women are more open to the energies of the unconscious and, therefore, the prehistoric sources of identity are more accessible to them than to men. This view of women, however, has always been a strong structuring tenet in Oates's work—this and the very real historical obstacles that limit women in time. One can see Oates discovering the subject as one goes through her work. Thus, Elena represents the logical culmination of an artistic interest in the lives and consciousness of women that Oates has been exploring with increasing concentration in her fiction for more than a decade.

In her first collection of short stories, *By the North Gate* (1963), Oates attempted to make explicit the hidden, unliberated lives of three very different women who represent those "who are inarticulate . . . who suffer and doubt and love, nobly, who need to be immortalized or at least explained." In "Sweet Love Remembered," she shows through Amie, a young waitress at a seaside resort, the isolating intuition that "the world was false and painful," and the fear that this knowledge will remain unsharable. "Images," the summary of a young woman's significant life through a series of flashbacks, describes the terrible but normal involvement of a sensitive, bright girl with family and religion, neither of which offers her a role. At Mass, watching the priest and the altar boys, she experiences the isolation of being "outside the magic" just as she is always to feel the pain of imagining and resisting the self she believes her family would have her be and the sorrow of being "someone else" instead. Because Oates understands so well a little girl's exaggerated notion of others' expectations of her and her sense of having failed them, she is able to delineate exquisitely the recurrence of this childlike emotion in a grown woman, who experiences it exactly as if she were "a little girl" again. In "Pastoral Blood," Oates examines the reaction of a typically American, college-educated girl ("Pretty girl! The work of centuries, civilizations, to bring forth such a product") to the spiritual desert of an impending marriage and a suburban trap, whose banal life has been simply a preparation for the kind of deadness symbolized by a mechanical girl in the window of a jewelry shop: "staring and beautiful, fleshless yet nicely human, with an arm sweetly extended and moving slowly back and forth, displaying on one finger a diamond ring."

Her first novel, *With Shuddering Fall* (1964), a variation of the God/Abraham/Isaac myth, treats the story with considerable irony, for she describes with chilling accuracy the lengths to which a young girl will go for paternal approval, to remain Father's "good girl." The "cure" that follows the mental breakdown of the protagonist is worse than madness, ending, as it does, for once and for all the possibility of "resurrection." Although Oates's point is that generally society's institutions are all too ready to support a woman's enslavement, she offers a refreshing alternative to this bleak assessment in the character of Grace in "At the Seminary," a story in the collection *Upon the Sweeping Flood* (1966). Here Oates clearly affirms the mystical potentialities of women.

The two novels that subsequently appeared seem to analyze stereotyped women, but Oates's stance is so critical that both offer rewarding insights when viewed from a feminist perspective. Both *A Garden of Earthly Delights* (1967) and *Expensive People* (1968) are concerned centrally with women's relationships with their sons. In spite of the fact that they have "made it" in American society, both the blonde Clara and the dark-haired Nada remain dissatisfied and isolated. Both have sons whose love they cannot satisfy: in *A Garden of Earthly Delights* Swan attempts to kill his mother, Clara, but failing in that commits suicide; in *Expensive People* Richard kills Nada and then proceeds to eat himself to death. Clara's ascent from the shack of a migratory farm worker to the great stone house in Eden County parallels Nancy Romanow's transmogrification to Natasha Romanov of suburban Cedar Grove—yet, Oates seems to be pointing out, no matter in what direction women move, their problems remain the same. In these novels the principal question the women face is how to act in accordance with their inner authority and still meet the responsibilities of external relationships. Oates is pessimistic about the possibility of finding an answer, for in both novels hungry sons will to kill their mothers for crimes of which the women are not even aware. Because of the impossibility of ever meeting the outrageous demands of children, motherhood is perceived as always and inevitably a death sentence.

The Wheel of Love (1970) includes twenty stories of which thirteen concern women exclusively. All, however, show an acute awareness of women's real lives and inner states of consciousness. Similarly, sixteen of the twenty-four superb stories in *Marriages and Infidelities* (1972) incisively explore the psychic states of women. In the same year Oates published *Wonderland*, which contains three excellent portraits of women, who together articulate the collective misery of the second sex. Finally, in her latest book, *The Hungry Ghosts* (1974), a series of devastating satires on academics, writers and critics, Oates cannot resist offering in "Up from Slavery" a wryly sympathetic portrait of Molly Holt, a young lecturer in English at Hilberry University, whose hiring and firing are both caused by her sex.

Oates's women have never been any less free than her male characters; all have inhabited a world that they are powerless to change. However, in *Do With Me What You Will* which, incidentally, synthesizes Oates's theory of art, her method, and her interest in women, she sees a way out, not through the law or any other of our present institutions but through awakened human consciousness. Where but in a character forced by experience to journey into the self in order to find both authenticity and authority would this new consciousness appear? Oates suggests that it would be born of woman. *Do With Me What You Will* is—to use terms with which Oates herself is so comfortable—a myth of creation; it is about the divinity in wom-

IN A FOG

Wandering in beach fog
I was the only one
to discover the bodies

of three sea birds
discarded by the surf.
Pressing gently against the sand

almost as once on air
when fast wing tips trembled
on surf thunder.

Another I found still
alive, kneeling in the cold
water, shivering at my feet.

It screamed as I
picked it up and stroked
the unruly feathers.

An intimacy between man and bird.
Yet, armed with my ignorance
of sea birds, I could
not name it.
The eyes . . .
stoic black beads, fierce
buttons, forced the question.

I have found a hundred
like these this summer
and left them shuddering

in the rising tide
and mounted the rocks
homeward in a fog

about us all.

Michael Niflis

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en. Galvanized by an orgiastic experience, which puts her, mystically, in direct contact with an ultimate reality, the source of her energy, Elena, the Queen of Sleep, awakens, harnesses the animal energy of the universe, and discovers the courage to "clear a passageway through the world" for herself. Like the symbolic act of Adam and Eve in the Christian myth, this too is a criminal act, an act of self-assertion which shatters the old paternalistic structures. Mysticism, however, has always been regarded with suspicion, and it is Oates's prophecy that salvation or liberation will not be possible in our time for anyone until her image of woman becomes both paradigm and prologue of a new heresy. In *Do With Me What You Will* Oates has made her own consciousness as a woman the subject of her work and affirmed the possibility of liberation for all humankind from the restricting structures of the past—but not until and only after women wake up. □

Interpreting Native America

THE LAST AMERICANS: The Indian in American Culture. *By William Brandon. McGraw-Hill Book Co. 553 pp. $12.95.*

D'ARCY McNICKLE

The writing of American Indian history within the past several years has flourished remarkably, as reflected both in the volume and in the quality of reportage. What is more, with the publication of the decisions of the Indian Claims Commission, the testimony of expert witnesses before that commission, the taped recording of oral histories by tribal elders and the reprinting of vast libraries of out-of-print documents, the sources for future studies and publication have expanded in spectacular fashion. The story of the first inhabitants of what Europeans chose to call the New World may yet be told with credibility.

And there's the difficulty. Historians have recognized for some time that the writing of a general Indian history presents what appear to be insuperable problems of definition, time scale and movement in space. The red race was infinitely varied in physical appearance, language habits, environmental adaptation, cultural attributes and social organization. The term Indian is, of course, a misnomer, since it purports to define what does not exist. There are Dakotas, Navajos, Cherokees, Aztecs—all bodies of people who, in aboriginal times, probably had no knowledge of one another and certainly would not make the mistake of assuming that they were interchangeable units within a mass society. As families, bands, tribes or confederacies, the first occupants of the Americas had a fierce pride of identity, such as modern nation states exhibit. The very names by which they knew themselves translate into such terms as "the people," "the real people," "people of the sun," or simply "persons." Each was an exclusive social entity.

What William Brandon has attempted in *The Last Americans*—an updating and general revision of the text he prepared for *The American Heritage Book of Indians*—is a general Indian history, such as fellow historians have doubted could be written. Whether he has succeeded in embarrassing his archival gainsayers will doubtless be variously judged by different observers.

There were sound reasons for doubt. Much of the available source material until recent years consisted of the documents resulting from the exploits of Europeans and their descendants in the New World. In order to write the Indian version of events it was necessary to disentangle from this primary information the threads of the Indian presence and to allow for ethnocentric bias. Most attempts to write about Indians in American history turn out to be accounts of what happened after contact with whites—a history of Indian-white relations in which the Indian is seen only in reaction to an incoming society and usually at a disadvantage. His own society is only dimly perceived, his motives are guessed at, his destiny is under a cloud.

As if the difficulty of finding authentic source material were not enough to discourage the venturing scholar, the task was made even more formidable by the necessity of finding a unifying theme that would bind together the infinite variety of Indian life spread across two continents. How to write about Indian America, when Indian America was experienced through an estimated 2,200 languages and was occupied by countless separate, identifiable political groups!

The 70 pages of chapter notes and bibliography accompanying *The Last Americans* suggest the extent of the search for original sources. Most of the cited material, inevitably, is drawn from the observations of white men, but wherever quotable material has survived from early Indian contact with the incoming European, Brandon has tracked it down and placed it in context. But it is in his interpretive passages, as in the chapters "Cities of Gods" and "The Image Makers," that Brandon gives meaning and substance to the Native American as cultural innovator and as a contributor to the formation of society in both continents. The contributions, as we are brought to see, are deeply ingrained in the institutions and life style that distinguish the New World from Old World society.

In developing this thesis, Brandon refutes James Bryce, whom he quotes to the effect that the Indians in American history have "done no more than give a touch of romance or a spice of danger to the exploration of some regions . . . while over the rest of the country the unhappy aborigines have slunk silently away, scarcely even complaining of the robbery of lands and the violation of plighted faith."

This essentially 19th-century view is thoroughly demolished by the author, who makes it clear that Indians were indeed concerned over what happened to their lands and their community life; their survival into modern times as keepers of ethnic boundaries gives substance to his argument.

Brandon also takes on as a challenge the dilemma of stating an acceptable unifying theme or focus for interpreting Native America, which historians have cited as an obstacle to the writing of a general Indian history. Such a statement, to be tenable, should have verifiability, it should be applicable to all Indian societies great and small, and it should have the quality of persistence through time and countering pressures.

Various contrasts between native society and the practices of incoming Europeans are detailed in *The Last Americans*: "The great reigning motive of life in the New World civilizations was always religious . . . the chief force everywhere, from the wildest people of the woods to the most dazzling Maya cities"; whereas, "The great reigning motive of life in the Old World was acquisition of wealth, property, business, the commerce of individual gain and ambition . . . and in this worldly welter religion was only one of many forces." The thought is epitomized elsewhere in the phrasing, "The Indian world was devoted to living, the European world to getting."

It is in the attitude toward property that Brandon finds the most striking differences between the two worlds and the key to Indian history as a social process. He returns to the comparison again and

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CHRISTMAS
Art Books, 1974
Lawrence Alloway
Records, 1974
David Hamilton
Books by *Nation* Contributors
Coming Next Week

again, as when he remarks: "The problem of ownership has always provided great difficulties in our understanding of the Indian world," and he quotes an Aztec source: "We can own only our own soul, the quality of our behavior, and remembrance of a good act."

In a longer passage he notes:

> The ownership of things in common had been noticed from the first by Europeans. Columbus wrote, ". . . nor have I been able to learn whether they hold personal property, for it seemed to me that whatever one had, they all took shares of it."
>
> • • •
>
> But it struck too deep a root of difference to be grasped. Europeans simply could not comprehend it. Likewise, the people of the New World were hopelessly bewildered by the European's spirit of competition for personal gain.
>
> • • •
>
> Much more was at issue here than a difference of abstract ideologies. Ramifications ran through every issue of life. These two world views, each never dreaming of the other's existence, had really created two totally different worlds.

The appearance of a classless, unpropertied New World society gave rise to basic misconceptions and, in the end, as Brandon reminds us, brought disaster for the native inhabitants. During the early years after discovery, European intellectuals, Montaigne among them, saw Indians as children of nature, unspoiled by the vices of civilization. The theme was elaborated upon by the egalitarians of the 18th century and was woven into Marxist ideology late in the 19th century, following the publication of Lewis Henry Morgan's *Ancient Society*. By perverse logic it followed that "children of nature" having, in Montaigne's rapturous phrasing, "no use of service, of riches or of povertie; no contracts, no successions, no partitions, no occupation but idle . . ." could not be regarded as lawful inheritors of the land entitled to fair consideration.

Brandon observes: ". . . all the jumbled images could not bridge the gulf to a comprehension of the Indians as people to be taken seriously. . . . Admirable as the images were, the public could comprehend the practical necessity of the removal of the eastern tribes" in the 1830s. The formality of treaty making became, in time, a cynical device for separating the Indian from the land which he held in too great respect to treat as a piece of merchandise.

The summary of all this, presented in the chapter on reservations, makes grim reading: "That these people will not depart [from their communities and get lost in the cities], even when their alien enclaves are rendered all but untenable, reduced to all but debris, entrains bitter consequences: they must be prepared to watch their infant children die at three times the national rate for the first year of life . . ."; and if the children survive, they are subjected "to staggering rates of alcoholism and, in some localities, suicide."

He continues: "The Indian world, the world of actual Indian communities, is under relentless siege still, as it has been ever since Europeans encountered it. The primary reason for this is, apparently, its basic alienness," alien because it is "attuned to a harmony of human relations rather than a harmony of commerce and industry, attuned to belonging rather than belongings."

In addition to dealing with theme and focus, Brandon demonstrates what has been obvious for some time, though not always acknowledged—that Native American history cannot be written as an adjunct to the story of European colonization in the New World. Without some understanding of the time depths and the variety of adaptations involved, New World societies seem merely eccentric, incomplete, infantile—barbaric was the term commonly applied. The early settlers saw themselves called upon to correct the deficiencies in native life, to improve its moral tone and set it upon the right path of development. This attitude, unfortunately, was accepted unquestioningly by those who came to write about Indians and portrayed them as a people without a history and without a destiny, defects that could only be remedied with outside help. What Brandon tries to make evident, by reviewing the archaeological findings and the ethno-history of early man in the two continents, is that cultural development followed a course in the New World quite different from that of Europe, resulting in a different kind of social being. Questions of inferiority or superiority are not relevant: genetic potential always allows for diversity in adapting to environmental rigors. He observes: "The European culture that invaded the New World was infinitely superior to the culture of the Indians in the broad field of mechanics," but "In the concepts of virtue, ethics, justice, and wisdom the two cultures frequently differed, but seldom widely."

Cultural borrowing was not a one-way transaction, from the invading European to the "deficient" native, as Brandon further remarks. "The point to be emphasized here is that the role of the New World's people was not entirely passive. It was active in the sense that they often welcomed their conquerors, nursed fledgling European colonies. . . . In other obvious direct respects the impact of the world of the American Indians worked fairly rapid changes in the Old World: with the spread to Europe of such Indian crops and products as corn, tomatoes, rubber, white potatoes, tobacco. . . ."

But beyond such material factors was that elusive quality in Indian life, so misconceived by the Montaignes and the Rousseaus, which influenced even while it baffled. Brandon again: "The Indian image operative on the European soul was often a far cry from Indian reality. The European soul thus altered often achieved an even farther cry from its expressed aim. But the fact remains that an undeniable reality, the peculiar character of the American Indians . . . did have its effect on the changing world of Europe."

The book has its problems. Some passages generate more confusion than understanding, as in the chapters "Nations of the Sun" and "People of Peace," in which the Spanish exploits in South America, Mexico and the American Southwest are threaded together, and the reader at the same time is introduced to scattered aspects of native society in those areas but with only a negative impression of what happened. Similar difficulties with an overburdened text are encountered in other chapters. Another source of at least mild frustration is the author's habit of using phrases like "as a recent authority has put it," "in the words of a classic study," "one of the most penetrating of modern archaeologists"—without always identifying in his chapter notes the reference source. Because he has tried to strike a balance between the text uncluttered by footnotes preferred by the general reader and the demands of scholarship for meticulous documentation, some readers of either category are going to be annoyed. And, in the matter of shortcomings, the absence of maps and other illustrative material often makes for ambiguity in identifying times and places.

Such carping aside, Brandon has contributed an impressive chapter toward the writing of a general Indian history. □

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From the Fiction Collective

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TWIDDLEDUM TWADDLEDUM. By *Peter Spielberg. 196 pp.*
All published by the Fiction Collective. Distributed by George Braziller. $7.95 each. Paper $3.95.

BEVERLY GROSS

Of all the literary art forms, the novel is the one that least lends itself to collective enterprise. Poets, dramatists, critics and essayists have always had a variety of reasons for collaborating, for forming schools, circles, camps and collectives, for establishing presses. Writers of fiction have almost always worked alone, with little benefit of support from their compeers, with virtually no history of alliances to help them in facing publishers or attaining a public. Poets forming schools know one another; they develop and share a distinct aesthetic; for a time at least they teach and inspire one another. There have not been many "schools" of fiction, and those that might conceivably go by that name (naturalism, the stream-of-consciousness novel, black comedy) are usually ex post facto critical denominations.

Novelists tend to be lonely craftsmen. They have not shown much tendency to regard themselves as having mutual aesthetic or economic interests. The facts of publication probably have something to do with it: novels are long and self-contained; they sometimes sell extremely well and publishers are capable of courting and nurturing novelists (in fact the most beneficial and significant collaborations in fiction have been between certain novelists and their editors). It may also be a matter of temperament. Novelists, even the gregarious ones, tend to be isolates from other novelists. Jane Austen in her family's bosom shared the isolation of Proust in his cork-lined room. Two lonely American novelists were for a brief time friends and neighbors; during that time they wrote *The Scarlet Letter* and *Moby-Dick*. Still, the friendship between Melville and Hawthorne was an interlude in their lives—compare it with the enduring connection between Emerson and Thoreau. Compare Pound and T.S. Eliot with Hemingway and Fitzgerald, whose most significant confrontation, Hemingway reports, was to compare the size of their privates.

The first offering, three novels, published by a group calling itself the Fiction Collective, comes without any statement of creed or intent. From the novels themselves I gather that the collective interest is more economic (in the largest sense) than aesthetic. There is no appreciable commonality of art here —the three books are different in mode, style and finish. The three authors seem to have little in common except for certain blatant indications from name and focus that they come from the urban Jewish male experience (the twelve writers named as the Fiction Collective could make a *minyan* at their meetings). The Collective members are all published authors and most have blossoming reputations. They have united, I surmise, around a joint purpose having to do with how they wish to be published, arising from some dissatisfaction with the present realities of commercial publication.

Publishing houses for the last few years have been putting out notably fewer novels and have become more best-seller

Beverly Gross, former literary editor of The Nation, *directs the program of special studies and honors at Queens College, CUNY. She is co-editor of* The Shapes of Fiction: Open and Closed (*Holt, Rinehart & Winston*).

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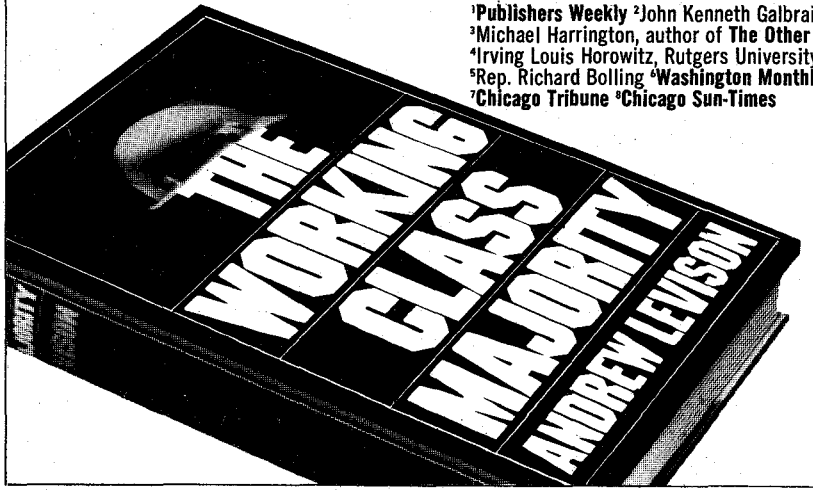
[5]Rep. Richard Bolling [6]**Washington Monthly**
[7]**Chicago Tribune** [8]**Chicago Sun-Times**



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conscious, more involved with film tie-ins and paperback rights. They are likely to be less and less supportive of a certain kind of writer: innovative, subtle, intellectual, difficult. These writers may still get published but not publicized. Some publishers are still willing to lose money in the cause of literature, but such munificence gets rarer and rarer as more and more houses get bought up by TV conglomerates. Nobody expects to make money on serious fiction by authors with relatively small names, least of all the small names themselves, and the pinch is getting tighter.

The members of the Fiction Collective are the publishers of their own work. They decide what gets published and will make profits or lose their own money by those decisions. At worst the Fiction Collective could be regarded as a nonprofit vanity press; at best as a labor of love, an example of courageous dedication to art and a shrewd idea. The volumes themselves are handsome, well-designed objects; they have a good, serious feel to them. Perhaps there are new markets to be tapped, new distribution possibilities that will sell these books, generate interest, and provide encouragement to these and other writers. The first three novels have not stirred me into thinking that something literarily exciting is afoot, and yet as a publishing venture of some interest, it may just be that the shared activity of mutual criticism and collective concern will produce an artistic community with perhaps some ultimate literary consequence. It is a distant possibility but also a happy thought.

The inclusion of B.H. Friedman's *Museum* surprised me. It is, formally at least, a mundane, even formulaic work, somewhat in the mode of Arthur Hailey's best-sellers which spin their web of human dramas around the inner workings of some institution. A museum is of course more exalted than a hotel or airport and the issues of Friedman's novel are accordingly more philosophic —unabashedly ethical, existential and aesthetic.

Emerson Skane III, a very rich scion of an American robber-baron fortune, ultra-civilized, self-contained, detached, unintentionally gets deeply involved in the running of the Museum of Living Art, an institution created and left to posterity by his dead father. A rather old-fashioned novel, *Museum* has a story line and is guided by some clear-cut moral issues. Perhaps too clear-cut: there is something remorselessly reductive in the setting forth of its scheme of oppositions: tradition versus contemporaneity, dilettantism versus professionalism, detachment versus commitment. Emerson Skane III exists primarily as the vehicle for contending with these dichotomies. He is a bloodless character, not because he is so aloof and self-sufficient but because the author has conceived and conveyed him so thinly.

I am left wondering about the publication of this book by the Fiction Collective. It is a reasonable guess that the manuscript has been around for a few years (the novel takes place in the late 1960s and shows every sign of having been written during and for those years; it is dated by its topicality). Did it make the round of publishers, and would it have moldered except for an occasion like this? If so is the Fiction Collective simply a salvaging operation? There is nothing particularly venturesome about this novel (except possibly for an alarming episode, worthy of André Gide, in which Buckminster Fuller makes a guest appearance). The book is moderately idea-ridden (the reason it would not likely be a popular success or eagerly taken up by the commercial houses). It is pulp fiction for highbrows.

Jonathan Baumbach's *Reruns* is an overly long conceit: autobiography recast into snippets of clichés from the movies. Most episodes end in horror or danger like the serials of our youth, but significantly without affect. Some of it is clever and darkly meaningful, but there is almost nothing cumulative here —just the same joke reworked too many times. Baumbach is a better writer than the vehicle he has chosen for this book: he has more to say than is made possible by the repetitious, narrowly confined form of his novel.

Of the three I was most impressed with *Twiddledum Twaddledum* by Peter Spielberg. It is a brilliant, a marvelous novel. Mystifying and haunting, the book, like all great art, creates a world —in this case one of a mind with less and less connection to the world. Pankraz, born into a well-to-do Viennese Jewish family, starves out his twin brother at his nurse's breast, as a child cannot eat, falls in love, and is later seduced by his governess or perhaps her sister, witnesses Nazi humiliation of Jews at public urinals, is packed away into an inhumanly crowded train bringing other Jewish youth to a concentration camp. But the train changes direction, becomes a "Le Havre-Amerika Non-Stop Express," and Pankraz, renamed Paul, is next seen in Part II of the novel riding a subway in the Bronx. He is living with a new set of parents (named as the last "the mother," "the father"), whom he leaves with as much indifference as the discovery that his first set had been removed by Nazi authorities.

Paul is obsessed with sex, and most of Part II of the novel is about his sexual fantasies, gropings and inexplicable conquests and rejections. Sex is easily offered—on the subways, where everyone is expected to chew gum, in movie theatres, in bars—but suddenly, confusingly, arbitrarily withheld. Paul finally re-loses his virginity (he had lost it in Part I with Lotte, his governess: the contradiction is Paul's discontinuity, not the novel's), and although sex, he discovers, is crushingly disappointing, he decides to continue to pursue it because his sullen character needs *something* to live for. "It was a settlement born of desperation, for he knew that a total defeat in this most sensitive area would make life utterly insupportable. He had no choice! He had been driven into a corner. He had to come to terms, had to split the difference." At the end he is rejected by his mistress Lola (shades of Lotte), who with her new lover sends Paul off in another packed train with another new name to re-start another life.

The book is a mockery of the traditional *Bildungsroman* it resembles: it starts off in the spirit of Thomas Mann, but charged with something else—puz-

POSTCARD FROM POISON SPIDER CREEK, WYOMING

Dear wife, space is momentary to the mind,
someone nearly said or wrote. I cannot
remember poems. Road maps have webbed out words,
but the feel of landscape here makes shutters click
even at 70 plus. There's something strange
about other places makes you want to
get where you never have to be: that point
you marked at sunrise. You watch the purple
turn to brown and marvel that all the creeks
are dry. Mostly you are afraid to stop,
and if you do you look for what you know:
your eyes are cameras that filter out the real.

Jim Barnes

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zling, changing, disquieting—and goes through further phases that recall Kafka, Beckett and, especially, Gabriel García Márquez. Lack of connection and connectedness are this novel's peculiar illogic. Pankraz-Paul, almost totally passive, has few memories, little consistency, no character. The narrative continually switches from first to third person, with no discernible narrative purpose except possibly to underscore the tenuousness of the fading connection between self and others. The book takes place in a world where whole families gather at their windows to stare all day at the people chewing gum in the elevated trains of the subway, where sex is a compromise with life, where despair is too strong a feeling to be felt, where love is not even in question.

Almost great. Something goes out of the novel in Part II: the book simply cannot sustain its initial energy and interest as Paul's character narrows to include only sexual hunger as his sole motivating force and feeling. In fact, this beautifully spirited and compelling book becomes finally thin and tedious.

I will make an unflattering guess. Publishing houses have seen the manuscript of Spielberg's novel, expressed interest, but wished for extensive revision that the author was loath to carry out. I will further guess that the Fiction Collective, despite its presumed dedication to literary quality, may very well make slacker demands on its authors. It may be that some of the works the Collective has and will put out would not have been published otherwise. This is not necessarily a service to the reading public or (in Spielberg's case) the author. □

Wrong Man on Horseback

THE PLOT TO SEIZE THE WHITE HOUSE. *By Jules Archer. Hawthorn Books. 256 pp. $7.95.*

RICHARD J. WALTON

This book is great fun. It reads like a "best-selling novel soon to be made into a major motion picture." Indeed, the "plot" to seize the White House during the FDR early years was probably the inspiration for *Seven Days in May*, which was a "best-selling novel . . ." etc. The trouble is that this book is hard to take seriously. There is certainly a place for popular history and there is a foundation of fact for the belief that there was a plot to seize the White House paid for by right-wing Wall Streeters. But the alleged plotters were so inept—it makes the Kissinger kidnap caper seem sensible—and Jules Archer provides so little documentation for his assertions that one wishes he had written it consciously as a comedy instead of as the unconscious comedy his terrible earnestness sometimes makes it.

There's another problem. It takes so few pages to record all the facts known about the plot that the only way to eke it out to book length is by padding. Some of the padding is accomplished by simple repetition but most of it is achieved by means of a vastly entertaining mini-biography of the book's principal figure, Maj. Gen. Smedley Darlington Butler, who was quite an extraordinary man. Butler, you may recall, served with the Marines in China, held various top posts in the Caribbean during the Dollar Diplomacy days, twice was awarded the Medal of Honor, was, at his retirement, the senior major general in the Marine Corps; was, in short, everything you would expect a "hawk" to be. But he came out of the Marines hating war (in the years before World War II he was a leading anti-interventionist) and, even more remarkable considering the affinity between generals and the rich, emerged as an earthy, free-swinging opponent of Wall Street and Big Business, castigating them for using the Marines for their own greedy purposes around the world. On top of that he was a thoroughgoing democrat (although a Republican), a fervent supporter of bonus-seeking World War I veterans and a vigorous booster of FDR. Hardly a Patton.

Yet he was the man sought by the plotters to lead the coup against Roosevelt. Since Butler was the focal point of the strange plot, it was only appropriate that Archer give the reader some idea of what kind of man he was, but chapter after chapter is simply too much—although it was so entertaining I'd like to read a full biography of the crusty little general.

Finally, Archer gets to the plot itself. A veteran named Gerald C. MacGuire, who flashed a lot of money and dropped a lot of Wall Street names, cozied up to the approachable Butler and offered him huge fees to speak before veterans' groups. All he had to do was drop in a few lines about the desirability of returning to the gold standard. MacGuire was pretty obvious; it did not take Butler long to smell something fishy. He kept turning MacGuire down but did not close the door entirely, hoping to learn more. Over a period of months Butler found out that MacGuire, and presumably the money men behind him, wanted the old Marine to use his enormous popularity with veterans to form a veterans' organization

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Richard Walton, author of Cold War and Counterrevolution: The Foreign Policy of John F. Kennedy (*Viking*), *is working on a study of Henry Wallace and the 1948 election.*

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that would force FDR either to turn the government over to Big Business types while remaining in office as a puppet or, if FDR would not go along, oust him entirely.

When Butler grasped the dimensions of the scheme, he enlisted the assistance of Paul Comley French, an investigative reporter for the *Philadelphia Record*. In time they turned to the House Un-American Activities Committee, which in that era investigated Fascists as well as Communists. MacGuire appeared before the committee in executive session and denied just about everything, but investigation established that he had had the big sums of money he denied having, that he had spent months in Europe examining Fascist movements, especially those based on disgruntled veterans, and that he had connections with such big names as Morgan, DuPont and the like. But the committee, then under John W. McCormack and Samuel Dickstein, did not press very hard to establish the exact purpose of the links between the free-spending MacGuire, the Wall Streeters and the American Legion, in its early years a creation and instrument of a few rich men. And when some of the committee testimony was made public, a lot of the material pointing at Wall Street was held back. Further, much of the press tried to dismiss it all as a joke, as did the Wall Streeters concerned. Nor did FDR, who was at first very interested, do anything to push the case. Perhaps he figured that the plot was cuckoo in the first place, had not amounted to anything in the second, and he had enough trouble with the Morgans, et al., without looking for more.

Not surprisingly, the redoubtable General Butler was outraged, and he continued to raise hell in public for months thereafter. A very small segment of the press and a few public figures remained interested for a while, but eventually the furor simmered down. Nevertheless, there clearly had been something brewing. There was a tie, as has been suggested, between MacGuire and some Wall Streeters, and also with the American Legion and the American Liberty League, the latter a right-wing organization that sprang into life just when MacGuire told Butler it would. However, Archer does little more than retell an old story, using material printed a generation ago by writers like George Seldes and John L. Spivak. He uncovered nothing new, and so we still do not know whether a serious, dangerous plot was in the works or whether it was merely a case of boardroom daydreaming exploited by a hustler who fattened his wallet at the expense of those whose hatred for "that man in the White House" allowed them to be conned. But his book certainly does whet my appetite for more on that cantankerous Smedley Darlington Butler. □

DANCE

NANCY GOLDNER

In a good performance of a Merce Cunningham work the dancers transform the incipient sense of dance steps into an event you feel something about. The process of materialization is similar to the pointillist technique Robert Rauschenberg used to paint the backdrop for Cunningham's *Summerspace*. I've not seen the Cunningham dancers do *Summerspace* and, given Cunningham's reluctance to revive old pieces for his troupe, perhaps I never will—but I've seen them do their magic tricks on many other Cunningham ballets. When the New York City Ballet did *Summerspace* in the mid-1960s, the cast reportedly had trouble dancing in the hazily defined areas of the stage. For me, their problems of orientation did not prevent them from making *Summerspace* reverberate with tone. The ballet was calmly anticipatory, pensive, benign. It brought to mind the image of idle people twirling their toes in temperate water, three-quarters content to watch the rings come and go and not do much of anything else—a nice way to spend August.

The Boston Ballet's recent *Summerspace* yielded no tonal qualities—all I saw were the dots—but that is not so unfavorable a comment as it sounds. First, I enjoy pressing my nose against pointillist paintings. By placing myself in the same relationship to the paintings as the artist did when he painted it, I always think that I'm going to discover the secret formula for optical illusion. Second, it turns out that *Summerspace* succeeds also from the wrong end of the telescope. And now I'm not so sure that the wrong end is not in fact a legitimate alternative.

On the basis of the Boston Ballet's November performance, I cannot say what *Summerspace* feels like, and have no reason to assume that it adds up to anything more than what you see. But I can say what it is. It is dance fragments, composed of no more than four or five steps, repeated again and again. The first fragment, for example, is a sweeping leg kick to the side, followed by a slight bounce in fourth position *demi-plié*, followed by a lazy *chainée* turn. With its varying dynamics, the novelty of seeing a dancer posed in the open fourth position (usually it's a transitional figure), and the novelty of a lazy turn, there is something to see. But Cunningham develops this and other themes much further. Sometimes dancers do the fragments in canon; in a couple of instances the canon is like a chase, and in one particularly charming moment a man puts his hands softly on the shoulders of the woman he is chasing as soon as he catches up with her fleet footwork. Then he quickly pitter-patters her offstage, their feet in resounding unison. Often the fragments change color because they are done in varying directions. Sometimes the fragment is not completed, or is completed by another dancer. After a few repetitions, the fragment might be dropped and reintroduced at a later time. When this happens we see it in a strikingly different visual context. And sometimes it's the step of the fragment rather than the fragment itself that is developed. For example, the *demi-plié* of the first combination turns later into a full *plié*. We see this *plié* at a three-quarters angle. To spice things up, a second dancer enters and does a series of *pliés* in a different manner, with her knees touching and with one leg stretched out in front of her. Her body is also at three-quarters view, but since she faces in the opposite direction, a slight friction between the two is established. (Cunningham has made a whole ballet about these frictions, called *Cross Currents*.)

The mileage that Cunningham gets out of such austere methodology is no less than phenomenal, but the process can be understood. What remains mysterious is the source of the ballet's cohesiveness, for there is no all-embracing rhythm, distinguishable sections, or sense of building to or away from anything. One begins to sniff for systems other than the variations-on-a-theme structure. Does the number of steps in each fragment fall into patterns? Do the repetitions of fragments fall into numerical patterns? And finally, would these underlying systems, if they existed at all, give to dance what meter and rhyme schemes give to poetry? Or are they simply the choreographer's organizational charts?

In the case of *Summerspace* I'm inclined to believe that, if there are numerical systems, they leave no residue. What holds the ballet together, and what holds us to the ballet, is more a virtue of the fragments themselves than of the relationships between them. They have intrinsic integrity. Each step of each fragment can withstand the pressure of isolation. Set as they are in multi-directional courses, each step affirms the multi-faceted beauty of the dancer's

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body in action and the multi-faceted interest of the step itself. One takes from this particular performance of *Summerspace* impressions of a side-angle view of the leg's travels from the ground to the knee and its extension to the side; the contrast of the partly hidden leg raised to the back in *attitude* with the very exposed frontal view of the chest; the absolutely straight diagonal line from the small of the back to the forehead when the dancer is leaning forward on a bent knee. These pictures are only half the story, but given their weight—indeed, the last-mentioned pose, so plain and simple, is powerful enough to become a signature of the ballet—half the story suffices.

Winterbranch, the second Cunningham piece done by the Boston Ballet, is all tone and atmosphere. If it does not scare and disturb, it has not worked. It worked for the Boston audience all right, but instead of sitting there scared and disturbed, it fought back. In a communal effort to kill the ump, the audience first had a polyphonic coughing fit, then a giggling fit, and then walked out. There was nothing secretive or defensive about their reaction; pride was what they felt.

Watching *Winterbranch* is like groping in shadowy darkness for something you can hear and smell but can't quite see. Light either flashes around the dancers (and occasionally onto the audience) or washes them out, rendering them semi-visible. Since one never knows when and from where and onto what the light will play, the only thing that seems certain is uncertainty, and even that is not certain. Furthermore, what we can see of the dancers is menacing. They wear grayish-black, shapeless jumpsuits, the shapes of their heads are made anonymous by close-fitting caps, and their eyes and cheeks look scarred—or are they animals with smudged stripes, interrogation officers from a new race of men? Much of the choreography consists of what must be termed, this being a performance, nonactivity (lying on the floor, walking across the stage, etc.) and outrageously strange activity (dragging a body around while it is sitting on a cloth, hauling someone off the floor only to deposit him there again, etc.). Disbelief is the perpetual state of mind. They can't be up there doing nothing, you say, but the light isn't good enough to confirm nothingness. The people who walked out on *Winterbranch* were probably responding less to its "nondance" aspect, more to their own state of suspension. The people who stayed let *Winterbranch* entice them to believe in the possibility of confirmation.

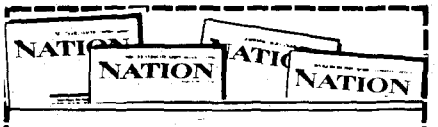
In being a dance that it is almost impossible to see, *Winterbranch* is almost a form of conceptual art, the functionally self-canceling object or event. It's the "almostness" on both counts, of course, that makes it possible for Cunningham to hold us (or some of us) to his ballet. A purer statement is the sculpture of the book whose cover is made of prickly spines. Another example, midway in purity between Cunningham's conception and the spiny book, is the LaMonte Young sound score that starts up midway through *Winterbranch*. So high is the decibel level and so piercing the sound, reminding one of thousands of birds screeching over a garbage dump, that it's painful to hear. (And if what medical science and many musicians say is true, it's also harmful to hear.) One must wonder why Cunningham does not find the music offensive, because it axes in two the tension line of semi-visibility and the dividing line between being almost and actually conceptual. If the people who walked out on *Winterbranch* during the first half may be called emotional cowards, those who walked out during the second half must be pronounced physical cowards and therefore sane. □

MUSIC / David Hamilton

The Metropolitan Opera production of Janácek's *Jenufa*, while hardly likely to satisfy those who have encountered the work in one or another more authentic incarnation, will doubtless win it new friends. For all of Günther Rennert's mannered overproduction and John Nelson's undercharacterized musical direction, some instants of theatrical excitement are generated, and these days that's rare enough in the opera house.

This was not the company's first presentation of *Jenufa*, although possibly the only person in the theatre on opening night (November 15) who actually remembered the five 1924-25 performances (in Max Brod's German translation) was Maria Jeritza, who sang the title role way back then. The subject matter—when Jenufa, a pretty Moravian girl, is abandoned by her scapegrace fiancé after he has gotten her pregnant, her foster mother hides her away for the birth of the child, which she then secretly drowns while Jenufa is sleeping, to clear the way for another man to marry her—seems to have been a stumbling block fifty years ago. The late Ernest Newman (a guest critic in New York that year) felt impelled to observe that "A more complete collection of undesirables and incredibles has never previously appeared in opera." (Surely Mr. Newman, of all people, must have been aware of the dubious lot that populates Wagner's *Ring*: nasty Alberich, double-dealing Wotan, cheating Loge, shrewish Fricka, incestuous Siegmund and Sieglinde, loutish and ungrateful Siegfried, and all the others?) Evidently times have changed, for now Mr. Schonberg tells us that "One leaves *Jenufa* convinced that mankind still has some good in it."

Newman also judged the music to be "only a cut above the amateur," approving the "national songs and dances" and finding elsewhere "nothing but conventional operatic formulae"—a curious opinion, since it is today only the folkish material that strikes us as at all "conventional." In *Jenufa* Janácek's *melos* is not yet as restricted as in the later works (of which *The Makropoulos Affair* is locally the best known), but the short-breathed, repetitive phrases are characteristic. As Gerald Abraham has pointed out, Janácek "normally works with little melodic tesserae laid side by side in a way that corresponds strikingly with his lapidary prose style . . . the shortness of note-values is conditioned by the very nature of the Czech language, with its poverty of vowels on which the voice can develop tone. A language in which it is possible for stressed syllables or mono-



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syllabic nouns to have no defined vowel sound—*Vl*tava, *Br*no, *srd*ce (heart), trh (market), prst (finger)—is hardly a language of song." Overt lyricism, when it does emerge in this idiom, is thus all the more effective.

Sensibly, the Metropolitan played the opera in English, although what was sung often differed from the Otakar Kraus-Edward Downes translation credited in the program and sold in the lobby, and rarely seemed an improvement. (Through some fluke, the otherwise poor seat in which I found myself on opening night afforded perfect projection from the stage, so that virtually every word was audible, even the heavily accented ones of Teresa Kubiak, the Polish soprano in the title role. Only Astrid Varnay, as the Kostelnicka, Jenufa's foster mother, who tended to swallow her consonants, did not come through clearly. I gather, however, that this happy condition of general comprehensibility did not prevail elsewhere in the house.) To the extent that Janácek's phrases—instrumental as well as vocal—draw their rhythmic shape from the accent patterns of the original language, translation is obviously an obstacle to their accurate and vivid inflection, and this difficulty was not often overcome by the Met's conductor. (Conditions would doubtless have been better in this respect had Rafael Kubelik conducted, as originally planned, for he knows the original text intimately, and can reach back to that essential source of the composer's inspiration.)

Once again, a Met production suffered from visual inflation, at the hands of director Rennert and designer Günther Schneider-Siemssen, who afforded the Kostelnicka a cottage of truly royal proportions—the Moravian Hilton, as the audience immediately dubbed it. Lack of verisimilitude is not the only objection to such an absurdity: the vast distances the singers had to cover played hob with Janácek's carefully scored entrances and exits. Thus, Varnay had to grab the baby downstage right and embark on a 50-yard dash to the front door—nearly all the way to Amsterdam Avenue; even with unseemly speed, she failed to get out before her music had ended and the solo violin signifying Jenufa's awakening had begun. Similarly, in the last act, the director had Laca (Jenufa's new husband) sling the dining room table around to block the threatening crowd, but that still left ample room for end runs; the only mystery was why nobody attempted one, but the Met chorus forgot to look threatening, anyway. At every point where the production contradicted the clear stage directions or common sense, it engendered absurdities.

Most of the singing was good. Miss Kubiak, who first turned up here in some concert-opera performances with a powerful, even edgy sound, now has things well under control; she sang cleanly and affectingly, although forced to move about in all the standard good-peasant-girl poses. One could hardly help feeling sentimental about Miss Varnay's return; now specializing in character parts, she was one of the great Wagnerian sopranos and has been too long absent from the house. Still, she was not right for this part, breaking into a stylized staginess of gesture at critical moments. Jon Vickers (Laca), in exceptionally clear voice, as usual generated compelling physical and musical energy. William Lewis, whether from his own volition or the director's, portrayed Steva, Jenufa's original fiancé, more as dissolute, overbred aristocrat than as straightforward, irresponsible rich boy, so that his mien of earnest repentance in the last act seemed unconvincing. But muddled motivations were the order of the evening.

(A good recording of the opera, in Czech, by the Prague National Theatre, is on Angel SBL 3756.) □

FILMS

ROBERT HATCH

John Cassavetes' *A Woman Under the Influence* never says what it was that caused Mabel Longhetti (Gena Rowlands) to jump her trolley, but one gets the impression that she was driven mad by the well-meaning idiots who surround her. She is married to a hard-hat extrovert (Peter Falk) who bullies people with his affection, when he isn't endangering them with his rage. He seems to confuse domestic love with a brisk three-round preliminary bout, and his idea of how to get his wife over one of her "spells" is to invite all his buddies on the city maintenance crew home for an impromptu spaghetti lunch. Mabel's mother (Lady Rowlands) is an animated marshmallow, pink, soft and flavorless; her mother-in-law (Katherine Cassavetes) screams like a buzz saw hitting a knot and has an instinct for the disastrous remark. The family doctor is the sort of guy who always gets sent out for sandwiches. Given such associates, madness seems a prudent avenue of escape.

Cassavetes has observed and relishes working-class America and, taken one by one, these characters are authentic and well established. But as a group they are so obtuse, insensitive, unwittingly destructive and vulgar that I couldn't avoid feeling the cards had been stacked against Mabel for maximum dramatic effect and that, in the interest of picturesque characterization, the lower middle class had been libeled.

Which is too bad, for at the center of this Marx Brothers travesty of a family tragedy, Gena Rowlands gives a superb performance. She and Cassavetes have studied how people who are losing touch with reality actually behave. They know that often enough character does not change, but rather becomes exaggerated beyond the limits of "reasonable" behavior. Mabel is a normally affectionate, managerial, maternal and cheerful young woman. Going mad, she embraces everyone within reach, orders comparative strangers to perform in a garden-party *Swan Lake*, alarms her small children with cannibalistic mother love and says whatever comes into her mind with a devastating effect on general conversation.

Anyone who has had to cope with this sort of crisis will cringe at the terrible embarrassment the sane people feel in Mabel's company (the spaghetti lunch is a nightmare of sweaty humiliation), will recognize the bafflement that can rise to anger when one tries to reach a mind that flickers between coherence and chaos. Everyone tries to reason with Mabel because reason is the only approach they know, but of course it is like trying to thread a needle in a hurricane. Mabel is seized by a brainstorm with only moments of lull, and Rowlands, a large, healthy, comely woman, has learned how to show that this is a torment without making it ugly, grotesque, or in any way comfortingly remote. It is acutely painful to watch her, and one might say that her associates behave as badly as they do because they are suffering. But looking back on the picture, it seems to me that Rowlands has to contend with a milieu calculated to trivialize the tragedy of Mabel's illness by making her "comforters" clichés of insensitivity. It is hard to take seriously an episode of derangement when everyone concerned, except the victim, is a fool. Cassavetes works for an atmosphere of documentary realism and he is without question expert in the mores of lower-middle-class life. He achieves, thus, a surface appearance of authenticity that is shattered by the apparent, though doubtless unintended, assumption that blue-collar America is a society of apes. A number of presumably bourgeois critics are turning cartwheels over Falk's hysterical impersonation of a working stiff. It would be instructive to know how a crowd of real workers—and their wives—would rate his performance. □

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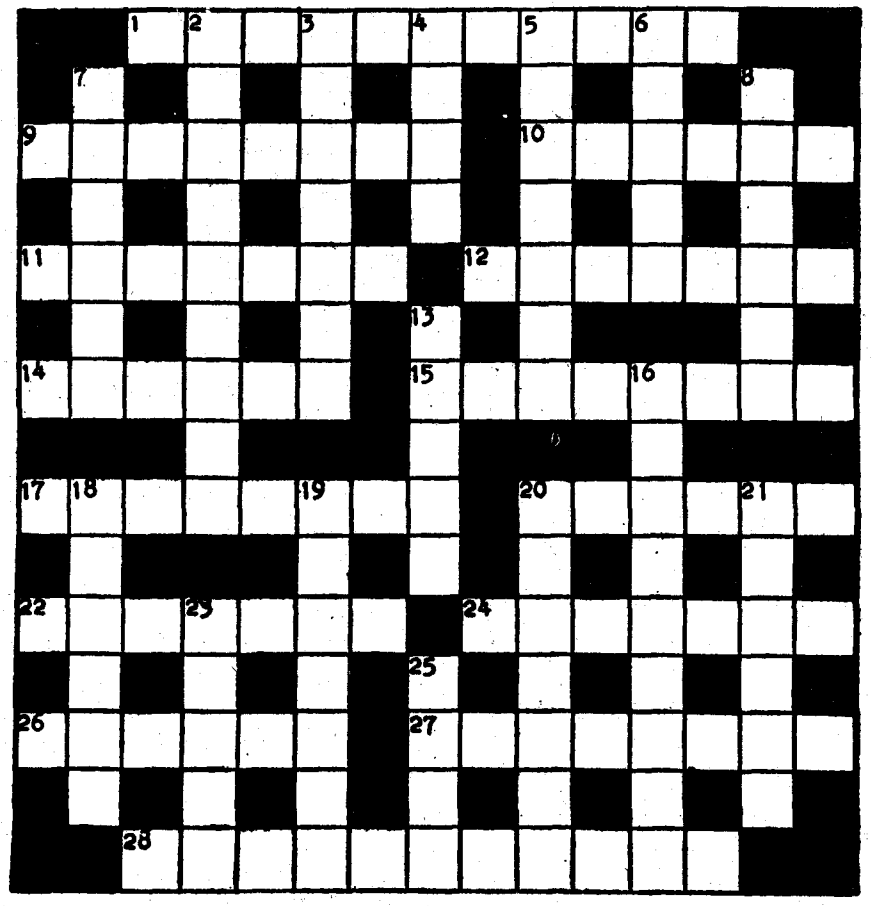
Crossword Puzzle No. 1563

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 Remember what you have to do when you go for the baby-sitter! (5,2,4)
9 Perhaps kitty reaches here around it, and really tries to win out! (8)
10 Not much of an insult! (6)
11 In the shock of Riley's verse, do Fred's seem different? (7)
12 Shows a picture of protective devices, possibly. (7)
14 Almost all the little stream causes a feeling of excitement. (6)
15 Does a relative of the ox-eye close when you see one? On the level, that's how things will be if you do! (8)
17 Tries to entice one, having sat around it somewhat awkwardly. (8)
20 See 5 down.
22 See 3 down.
24 Clear, sharp and ringing. (7)
26 You might get into a hole more easily with this removed. (6)
27 Like a name you haven't been able to 1 across, at least not in the money. (8)
28 What one might expect to find in Lilliput is novel, at least. (6,5)

DOWN

2 Implying some quick shots taken of what would never be described as a slow burn! (5-4)
3 and 22 across It should be an unaffected, factual account, and it takes study of many kinds to make it. (7,7)
4 and 25 down What the frustrated viewer might do for himself at the shopping center, perhaps, is very familiar to the lab technician. (4, 4)
5 and 20 across Irene, for example? (7,6)
6 With lesions, you're bound to get it back with a possibly disagreeable sound. (5)
7 The abomination of the Ammonites. (6)
8 Cotton cloth has given rise to a cheap comparison. (6)
13 The way a fool gets around by showing something of great depth? (5)
16 Bound to do it? (9)
18 Reputedly the last word in journalism. (6)
19 Sheer, perhaps, and complete in all respects. (7)
20 The song of the sea nymph? (7)
21 In short, the physician goes past the one responsible for the market getting stock. (6)
23 *Musical Times?* (5)
25 See 4 down.

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 1562

ACROSS: 1 Double figures; 10 Clink; 11 Crocheted; 12 Wormholes; 13 Rural; 14 and 18 Let the cat out of the bag; 19 Off the record; 22 Athos; 24 Channeled; 25 Unbending; 26 Image; 27 Again and again. DOWN: 2 Osiers; 3 Baksheesh; 4 Escalator; 5 Irons; 6 Usher; 7 Exterior; 8 Scows; 9 Adulate; 15 Exchanged; 16 Arranging; 17 Pomatum; 20 Alkali; 21 Adder; 23 Sinai; 24 China.

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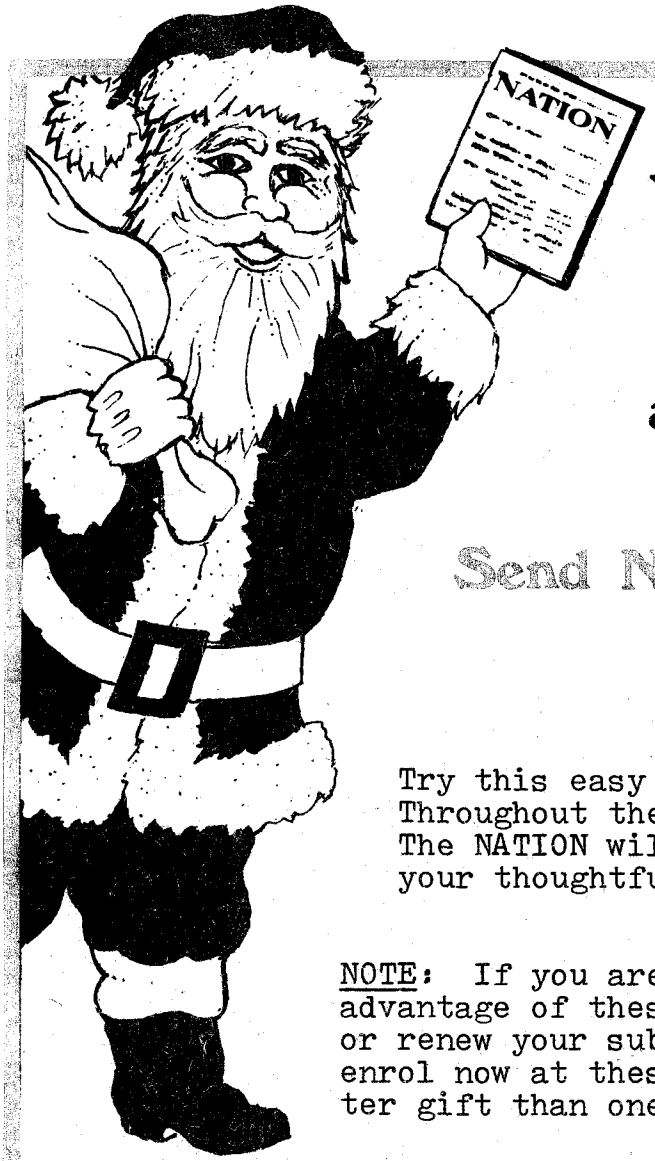

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